Issue 57 • February 1993 • £3.95

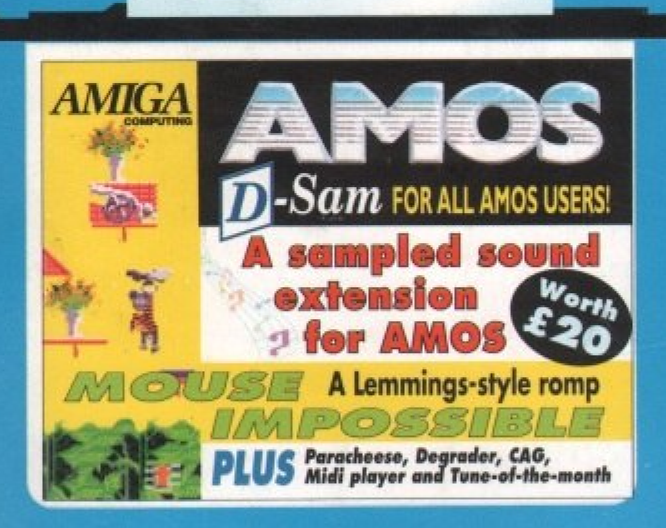


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Your first steps on the road to Amiga computing

PLUS

- AGA close-up, new chips under the microscope
- Viruses explained

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"If your in the market for a hand scanner then forget the rest and get Powerscan"
Amiga Format July 1992

Power Scanner v3.0



GOLD

- 100-400 DPI scanning resolutions
- 64 greyscales
- Thru'port for printer
- Award winning editing, image manipulation & scanning software

Power Scanner v3.0 .... £115
Power Scanner Colour £239

Epson GT-6000

GOLD



- 600 DPI Colour flatbed scanner
- 24-bit colour
- A4 reading area
- Software included

Epson GT-6000 .... £799

Epson GT-8000

- 800 DPI colour flatbed scanner
- 24-bit colour
- A4 reading area
- Software included
- Amazing scan quality

Epson GT-8000 .... £1199

Upgrade Offers

If you consider your scanner system to be inferior to the Power Scanner, we will happily upgrade your software and interface. (Power Scanner is compatible with most scanning heads)
v3.0 Upgrade (inc. interface) £49.95
v3.0 Software upgrade for PowerScanner users (send SAE) £15
The Amiga can only display 16 greyscales

Floppy Drives

"This drive contains more gadgets than Batman's utility belt"
Amiga Computing Feb1992

PC880B Power Drive



- Award winning drive manufactured by Power Computing
- Super slim design
- Anti-click (Cures that annoying click)
- Virus blocker (Prevents viruses)
- Built-in backup hardware

PC880B with Blitz Amiga £60
PC880B with Blitz & XCopy £75
PC880B (Cyclone compatible)* £65
PC880B in black case £65

*This drive is only available to registered owners of XCopy Professional. You must provide proof of purchase of XCopy Professional

Power Drives

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PC882 A2000 Internal drive £45.00

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- Two high quality disk drives built into one compact unit
- Same features as PC880B

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Blitz Amiga

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- Stops all external drives from clicking
- Contains anti-virus from being written into the bootblocker

Blitz Amiga £20

1.44MB Power Drive

- 1.44MB disk drive
- High density floppy disk drive

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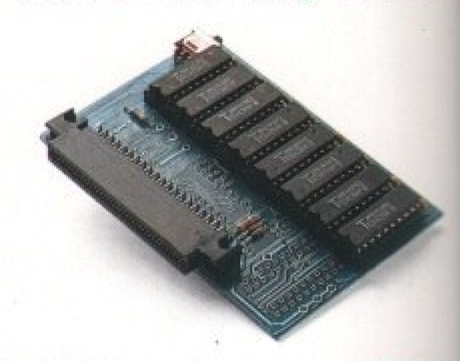
PCMCIA Memory

- Ultra slim memory cards
- 1MB & 2MB
- For A600/A1200

1MB Memory card .... £POA
2MB Memory card .... £POA

RAM Expansions

A600 Memory Cards



1MB RAM with clock £39.95
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1 x 4ZIP chips £14.95

2MB for any A500

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- 16-chip (1 x 1 DIP)
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- Fully supports 1MB of chip RAM
- Fully compatible with Fatter Agnus

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- Expand your A500's memory up to a total of 2MB without disposing of your existing 512K upgrade
- Works with 1MB of Chip RAM

(512K RAM must be 4 chip type or not exceeding 9cm in length)
(Your Amiga needs to be opened, this may effect your Warranty)

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A500 RAM Card

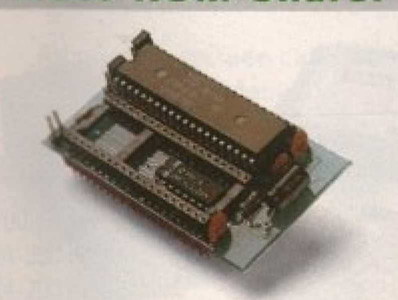
- 512K RAM expansion with clock & free software (A500+ compatible)

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512K RAM without clock £24
512K RAM (16 chip) with clock £24
512K RAM (16 chip) without clock £19

Power Computing, France, 15 Bld Voltiare 75011, Paris, France. Tel (1) 43386206 (6 lines) Fax (1) 4338002

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- No messing about with switches
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- Simple internal fitting*

* Kick-off requires the lid to be removed from the Amiga. This may invalidate your warranty.

ROM Share	£17.95
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ROM Share inc. kickstart v1.3	£39
ROM Share for A600	£29

Kickstart v2.04

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2.04 Kickstart ROM, workbench software, install disk 2.04, font disk & extras	£79.95
2.04 kit with ROM sharer	£99

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- Use VCR as a backup storage device
- Blank video tape is all that is required
- 200 Amiga floppy disks will fit on a 4 hour tape
- Can be used for hard disk backup
- There is room for 175MB of data
- Backup an Amiga diskette in 1 minute
- Restore even to an unformatted disk
- Hard disk backup, software allows you to specify which files and directories to be stored
- Low cost storage, 2 pence per MB
- Menu driven software
- Allows you to watch TV on a 1084s monitor
- Very high reliability
- Log files, contain title and counter position of every backup
- Video connection check, ensures fool proof operation
- Effective error-correction scheme
- Easy to understand manual

Video Backup System	£59.95

A500 Hard Drives

GVP A530 Turbo HD



- 40MHz 68030EC accelerator
- Optional 68882 maths co-processor
- Up to 8MB 32-bit FASTRAM on-board
- Award winning

42OMB HD OMB RAM	£549
80OMB HD OMB RAM	£649
240MB HD OMB RAM	£1054
68882 Upgrade kit	£224

GVP Series 2 HD

- Up to 8MB FASTRAM on board

40QMB 0MB	£329	80QMB 0MB	£399
40QMB 2MB	£379	80QMB 2MB	£449
40QMB 4MB	£440	80QMB 4MB	£499
40QMB 8MB	£509	80QMB 8MB	£549

ICD Novia Internal HD

- Fits inside your Amiga 500
- Comes complete, just plug-in and go

Novia 40I 40MB HD	£279
Novia 80I 80MB HD	£349

ICD Flicker Fixer

Flicker Free Video 2

- Stop that annoying flicker
- Fits internally in the A500
- Multi-sync monitor required

Flicker Free Video 2	£199
NEC 4FG Multi-sync monitor	£549

Chips

4MB x 8SIMM	£90
1MB x 8SIMM	£25
256K x 4DRAM	£4.00
1MB x 1DRAM	£3.95
1 x 4 ZIP	£14.95
1 x 4 DIP	£19.95
A3000 Static column RAM	£19.95
SIMM 32 x 1MB-60	£65
SIM 32 x 4MB-60	£243

(These chips cover most memory & hard drives i.e. GVP, Supra, Commodore)

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- Free technical and buying advice
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- Wired mouse
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- Infrared remote control

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A570 CD-ROM drive for A500	£349

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Barney Bear goes camping	£29.99
Battlechess	£39.99
Case of the Cautious Condor	£34.99
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Fred Fish CDPD Collection	£19.95
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Fun School (Over 7yrs)	£24.99
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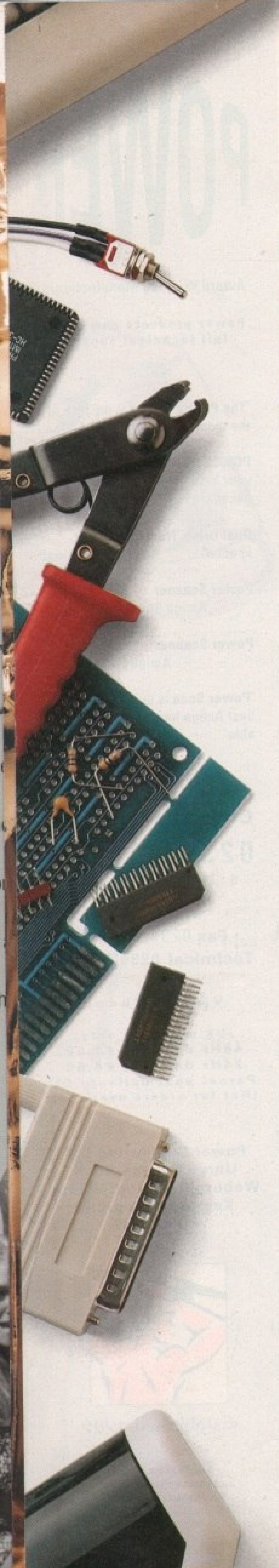
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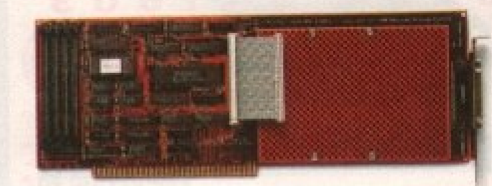
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GVP Series 2 HD
- Up to 8Mb SIMM RAM on-board
- Supports external SCSI devices
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40QMB 0MB £249 80QMB 0MB £349
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40QMB 4MB £349 80QMB 4MB £449
40QMB 8MB £429 80QMB 8MB £539

Nexus Hard Card



- Up to 8MB RAM on-board

Bare £129
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40QMB 2MB £299 80QMB 2MB £399
40QMB 4MB £349 80QMB 4MB £449
40QMB 8MB £429 80QMB 8MB £539

Bare SCSI Hard Drive

40 Quantum .. £179 80 Quantum .. £229

(Suitable for GVP G-Force, GVP HD or Nexus HC)
Other sizes of HD available, please call

RAM Expansion
- Aries A1500 / A2000 RAM

2MB .... £129 6MB £209
4MB .... £169 8MB £249

Macintosh Emulator

"This really is the best emulator we've seen for the Amiga. It behaves just as if you really were using a Mac"
Amiga Format Sept 1992

AMax-II Plus
- Amiga 1500 and above
- Runs Mac software
- Runs System 7
- Full support for all SCSI Mac peripherals and the ability to read Mac disks in your drives
- 68020/68030 compatible
- AppleTalk emulation
- Can use Amiga ECS
- Easy to install

AMax-II Plus £229
(Mac ROM chips required)

24-Bit Colour

OpalVision
- 24-bit graphic card
- 16.8 million colours available
- Operates in all standard Amiga resolutions
- VLSI Microcode graphics co-processor
- Double buffered 24-bit and 15-bit animation is available in all resolutions
- 'Palatte-mapped' design updates screen colours in real-time. Fade pictures in and out and change their palettes
- Equipped with 1.5MB of display RAM
- Auto-config for NTSC or PAL
- Available for all Amigas

Software included

OpalPaint
- 24-bit painting and image processing

OpalPresents
- Presentation program
- Control OpalVision images, Amiga graphics and live video
- Includes fades, effects etc.
- Many more features

King of Karate
- 24-bit computer game
- Exciting karate competition
- Demonstrates OpalVision capabilities

OpalVision £699
More information available
OpalVision roaster chip available soon

Monitors

"For a monitor of this quality, the CM8833 is worth every penny"
Amiga Format Sept 1992

"The 4FG is an absolutely smashing monitor that beats every competitor"
Amiga Format Sept 1992

Philips CM8833 Mk2
- With cable
- Available with Lotus Turbo Challenge 2
- On-site maintenance



CM8833 Mk2 .... £199

NEC Multisync 4FG
- For use with Flicker Fixers
- Very high quality
- Built-in degausser
- 15" Screen



NEC Multisync 4FG £549

Optical Hard Drive



- Manufactured by Power Computing
- 128MB on one optical disk
- Read and write optical disks
- 40ms running speed
- Built-in power supply
- High power cooling fan
- 25-way and 50-way SCSI ports
- Thru'port built-in
- SCSI ID switch
- Compatible with major SCSI controllers

128MB optical drive (Internal) £729
128MB optical drive (External) £999
128MB 3.5" optical disk .... £39.95 each
SCSI controller card
for A1500 / A2000 .... £129
(Compatible with Amiga, PC, and Mac. A SCSI controller is required on the Amiga and PC)

Floptical Disk Drive
- Stores 20MB on one 3½" disk
- Cost effective mass storage unit
- Can be used as a 1.44MB floppy with Amiga DOS and AMAX
- AMAX compatible with DMI Mac driver
- Packs an entire back-up onto one floppy
- Additional disks available
- Internal version for A1500/2000/3000
- External version for A500
- SCSI Interface required

Internal A2000 kit £289
Internal A3000 kit £289
External A500 kit £389
A1500 .... £599

Accelerator

GVP G-Force
- 68030 accelerator board
- 68882 Maths co-processor
- DMA SCSI controller on-board
- 68000 fall-back mode
- Only CPU slot is used
- Internal and external SCSI connector
- Converts to hard card with Hard Drive mount kit
- 32-bit RAM as standard

25MHz 1MB RAM £529
40MHz 4MB RAM £759
50MHz 4MB RAM £1249
Hard drive mount kit £35

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Tel 0234 843388

Printers

All printers include cables and next day delivery

Star Printers

LC200 colour	£199
LC24-200 mono	£239
LC24-200 colour	£289

Citizen Printer

Swift 24e (includes colour kit and AMI)	£279

Epson Printers

Laser

EPL-4000	£639
EPL-4300	£799
EPL-8100	£1349

Inkjet

SQ-870	£509
SQ-1170 (132 column printer)	£629

Dot Matrix

LQ-570	£289
LQ-1070 (132 column printer)	£449



LQ-100	£209
LX100	£189

Supra Modems

Supra Fax Modem Plus	£129
Supra Fax Modem v32Bis	£275
Supra Modem 2400 (External)	£75
Supra Modem 2400 Zlplus (Internal)	£134
Supra 9600	£210

Miscellaneous

Power Mouse	£15
Optical Mouse	£29.95
Replacement optical mouse mat	£9.95
10 Maxell disks, optical mouse, Zipstick	£45
Maxell multi-colour disks (10)	£9.95
Floppy disks bulk	£POA
Aviator 1 joystick	£35
Intruder 1 joystick	£29.99
Maverick 1 joystick	£15.99
Python 1 joystick	£9.99
Apache 1 joystick	£7.99



Colour PowerScan

The Power Computing colour hand-held scanner for the Amiga is now available. This scanner offers the following features

- 4096 colours
- 50-400 DPI
- 4 Scanning modes
- Text
- Greyscale
- Colour halftone
- Colour

The Amiga interface plugs into an A1500/A2000/A3000/A4000 expansion slot with a separate version which connects to the expansion connector of the A500/A500+. The A500 version has a through-port which is compatible with all Amiga 500 expansion peripherals.

The software supplied with this scanner is the new PowerScan Professional 3, which also supports the greyscale scanner and will be available as an upgrade to existing users of PowerScan for £15.

Colour PowerScan v3.0 features

- Real-time 'True-feel' scan option in colour halftone mode
- Images are stored internally as 12-bit graphics, not HAM. This means that no quality is lost due to the Amiga only being able to display HAM images in 4096 colours
- Images are displayed as HAM pictures
- HAM images may be loaded from disk and edited using PowerScan 3
- Image size that can be handled is limited only by the amount of memory available
- Memory does not have to be chip memory as in many art packages
- Images can be saved in various file formats
- View whole image function
- Scale/rotate/skew image or clipboard by any amount
- Crop image
- Clean up, lighten or darken image
- Variable zoom mode
- Draw freehand, lines, circles, boxes and polygons in various fill patterns, brush sizes, paste modes, or with the clip board image
- Clipboards may be scanned directly, or any shape can be cut from the main image
- The software is compatible with all Amigas
- Supports Workbench 2 and ECS screen modes

Colour PowerScan now available

New v3.0 Scan software

PowerScan Colour v3.0	£239
PowerScan Greyscale v3.0	£115
PowerScan v3.0 software upgrade	£15

The Amiga can only display 16 greyscales

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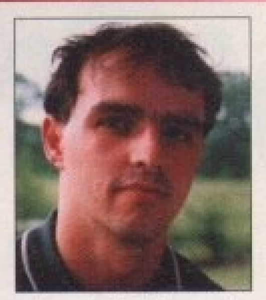
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Any owner's first steps in the world of the Amiga can be a wierd and wonderful experience.

The feeling of satisfaction at having completed a game of superb audio-visual quality, typing and printing your first letter with a wordprocessor, or adding the finishing touches to that DPaint masterpiece all are unique to what is the most flexible and powerful home computer in the world.

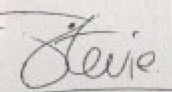
To reflect the experiences of new owners and beginners who might never have contemplated life after games, *Amiga Computing* attempts every year to place an emphasis on as wide a variety of subjects as possible and to approach these subjects in a down-to-earth way, thus welcoming new owners and new readers to our magazine.

This year, we've gone a little further than usual. Your magazine this month includes not only a guide to placing those first few footsteps on the road to productivity, but also makes an effort to de-mystify the virus hoodoo, explain the new AGA chips, which many of you will find inside your A1200 machines, and we have an in-depth look at sound samplers, one of the most popular serious uses of the Amiga over the past few years.

UK readers will also find our exclusive 80-page book, *Mastering the Amiga*, designed to help you over the first few stumbling blocks, and we have the usual array of quality reviews, games coverage, and shopping guides in our features, Gamer, and Amiga Market sections respectively.

Our second disk, containing the superb HiSoft Basic, allied to a major beginners' programming series beginning next month, should see many of our readers quickly become competent and comfortable users of some of the most advanced technology available on the high street.

All this simply goes to prove that there's only one complete Amiga magazine in Britain, and you're reading it - *Amiga Computing*!



FIRST STEPS

A gentle introduction to the Amiga's myriad useful skills for beginners and experts alike

WHO'S WHO

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For four years *Amiga Computing* has been the leading magazine for Amiga enthusiasts. As a key member of the Europress magazine group, *Amiga Computing* promises to inform, educate and entertain its readers each month with the most dedicated coverage of the Amiga available.

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REGULARS

Competitions

Zool packs from Silica just waiting to be won on page 93.

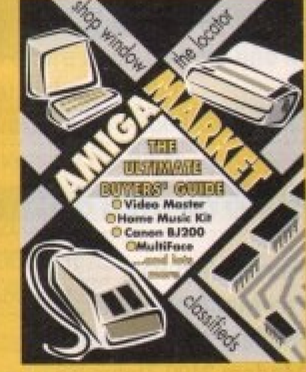
On page 115 is the second part of our superb A3000 and OpalVision spectacular from Calculus

Video Master

Home Music Kit

Canon BJ200

MultiFace



It's all in AMIGA MARKET

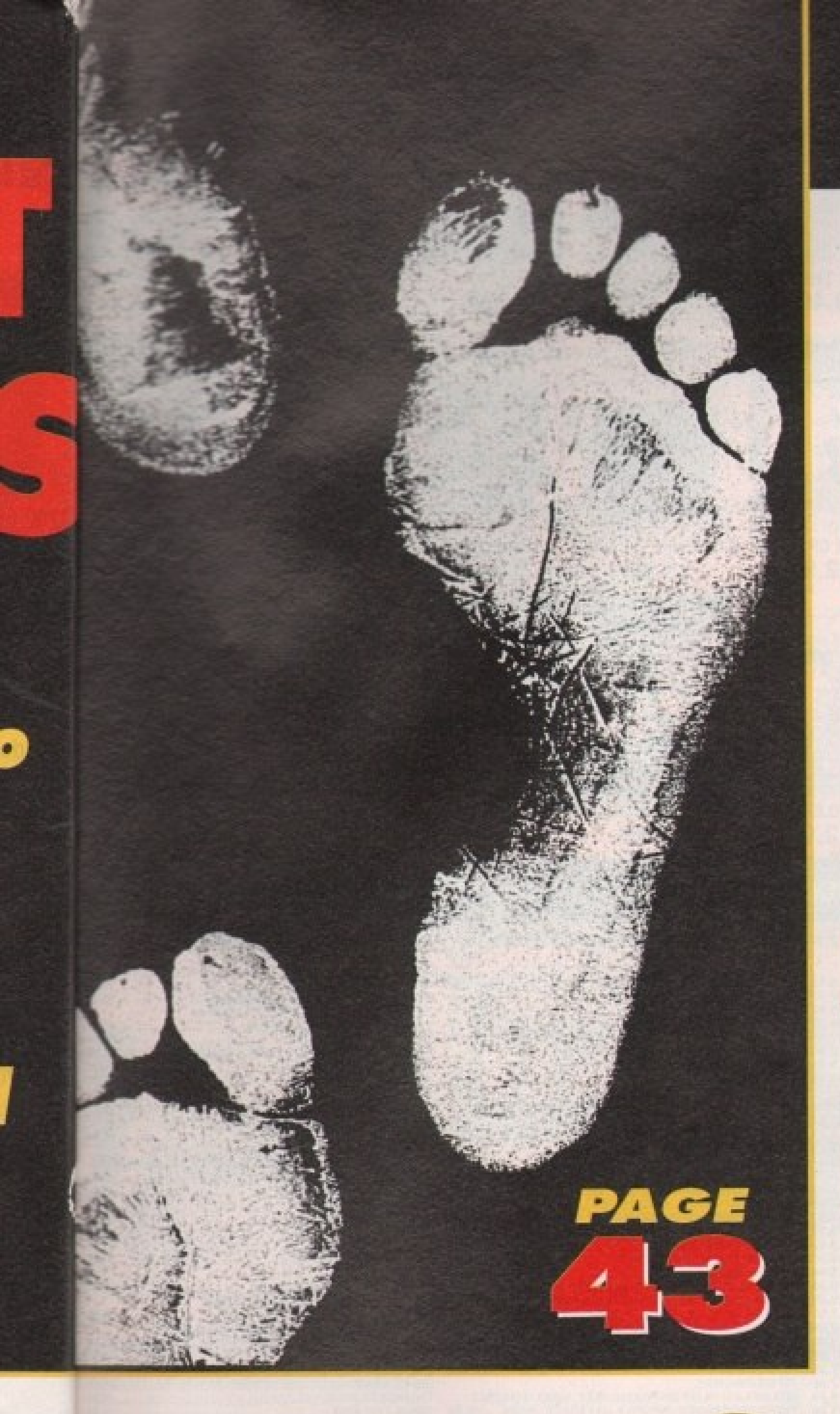
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Turn to page 173

amiga almanac

Nine pages of applications for the Amiga

CONTENTS

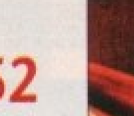




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SPECIALS



THE COVERDISKS

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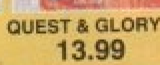
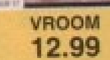


FREE! HiSoft Basic, a complete, powerful, beginner-friendly programming language!

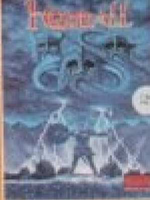
FREE! D-San, an essential musical extension to Amos! Total value: £60!

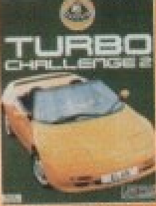
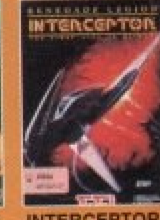
This month we bring you one of the Amiga's most powerful and easy to use programming languages, HiSoft Basic, which we'll be supporting from next month in an extended beginners' programming guide.

There's also an invaluable extension for musical Amos users and the usual collection of superb shareware games and utilities, including Mouse Impossible, a Lemmings-style strategy game, and CAG for those who'd love to produce their own graphic adventures.

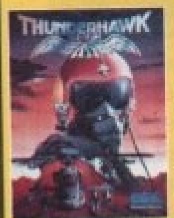
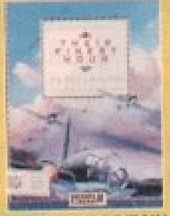
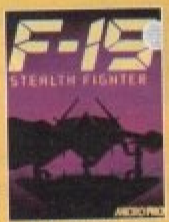





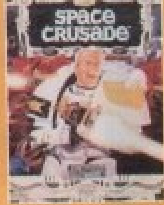


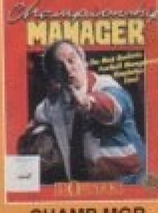



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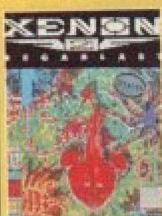


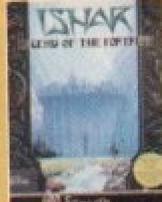
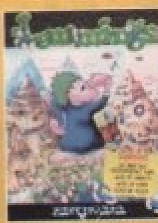







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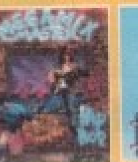
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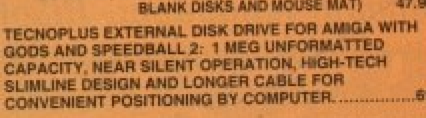
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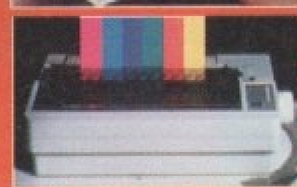
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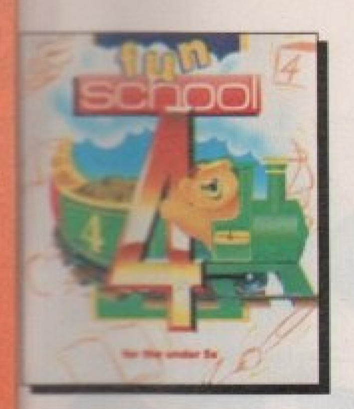
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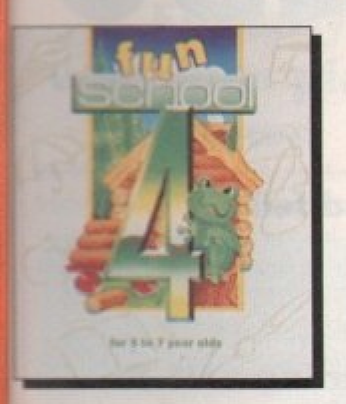
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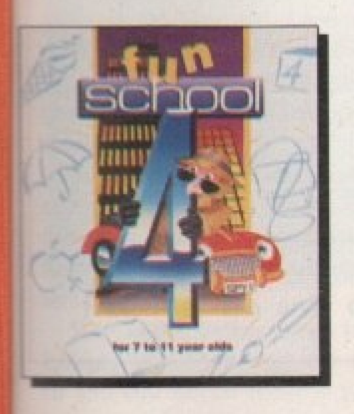
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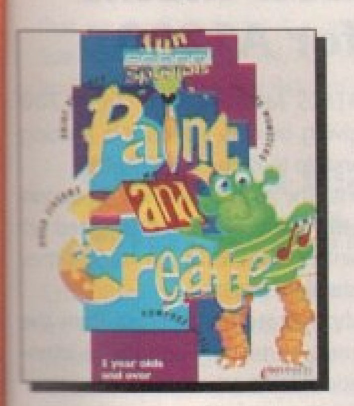
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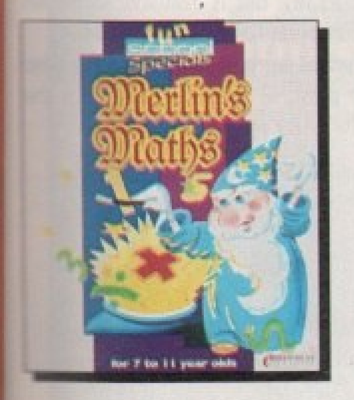
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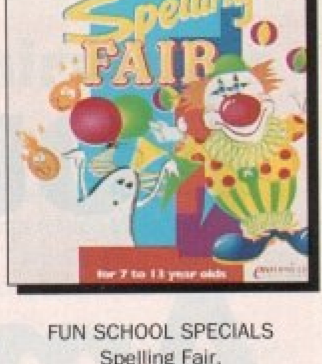
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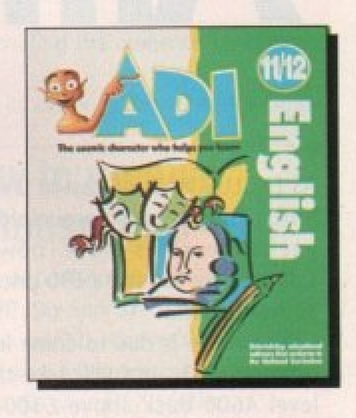


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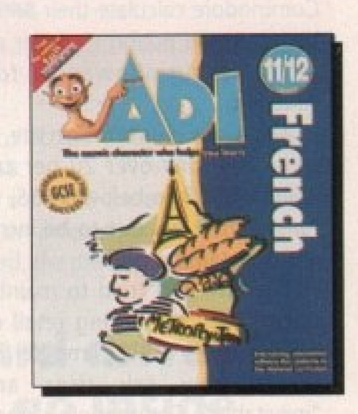
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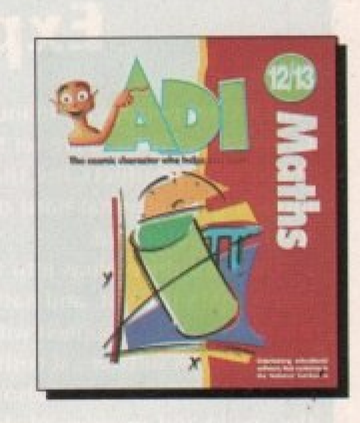
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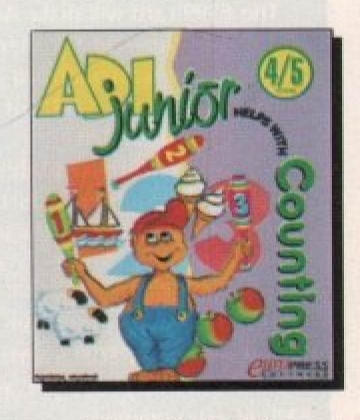
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Pound crisis to force Amiga prices up £30

by John Butters

AS EXCLUSIVELY forecast in last month's *Amiga Computing*, unfavourable currency exchange rates have now forced Commodore to plan a £30 price hike for all Amiga packs.

The move is due to come into effect on January 1, and will take the entry-level A600 back above £300 and the new A1200 to over £400.

Like most multi-national firms, Commodore calculate their British prices based on the pound to dollar exchange rate, making allowances for slight variations.

But since September the pound's value has sunk over 20 per cent from around $1.98 to below $1.55, although Amiga prices are due to be increased by less then ten per cent.

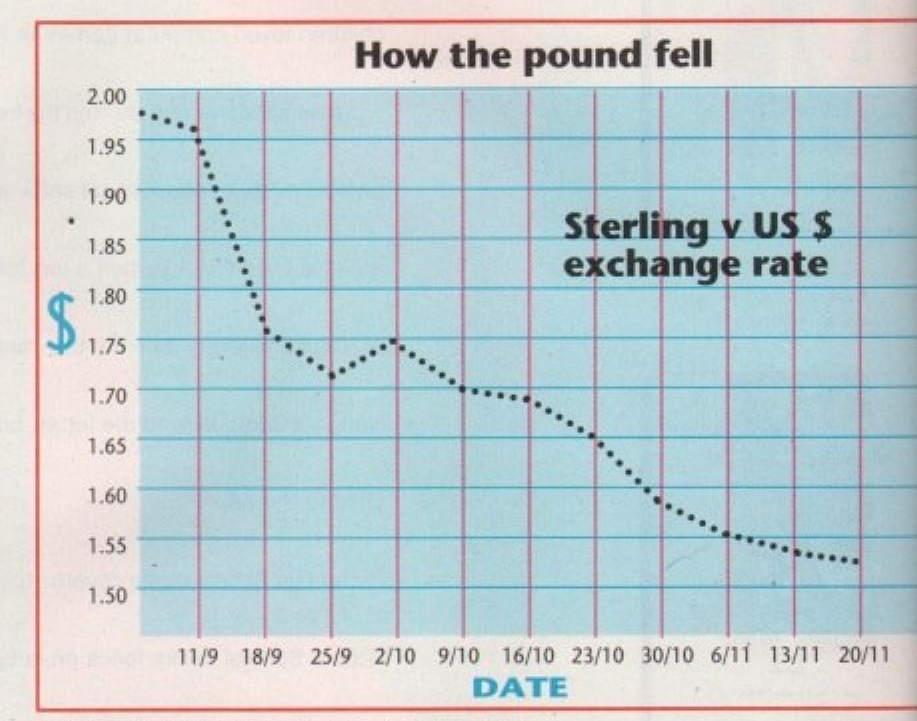
The firm had tried to maintain their price policy by cutting retail margins, but like many other computer manufacturers now say rises are now "inevitable". Commodore's Andrew Ball said: "Our margins have been adversely affected since September. It's more than likely that our prices will go up."

And now only an unexpected sterling recovery can stop the A600 rising to £329, the Wild, Weird & Wicked pack to £379, and the A600 Epic pack and standalone A1200 to £529.

The A1200, however, still remains in a perfect position to combat any possible threat from rival manufacturer Atari, when their 32-bit Falcon computer becomes available.

The 1Mb machine was due to be released in Britain during September with a £499 price tag, but as we went to press had still not appeared with dealers.

Commodore have promised to cut prices to their previous levels if the pound recovers.



Information based on National Westminster $ buy rates

Expansion trio on the way

AMERICAN peripheral manufacturer Great Valley Products are set to release three new products for the Amiga including an internal hard drive and RAM accelerator card.

The hard drive plugs into the A600 and A1200's IDE slot, and has 85Mb of storage capacity. Supplied with appropriate utilities software, it costs £399.

And A1200 users can also increase the speed and memory of their computers with a new 68030EC RAM accelerator card, running at 40MHz.

The £399 card will make Amigas run about four times faster than normal, and has a slot for a maths co-processor. Between two and 32Mb of hi-speed memory can be added.

No prices were available for the memory, although an industry expert said 16Mb SIMMS like those used in the expansion are "seriously expensive".

The third expansion from GVP will give the A1200 a SCSI interface, a slot for a maths co-processor and up to 8Mb of extra memory.

Supplied with 4Mb of 32-bit fast RAM, the board will cost £399.



First 68030 due for A1200

"Once again GVP have come to the aid of Amiga users, pushing the boundaries of Amiga technology ever forward," said a spokesman for UK distributor Silica Systems.

"For the first time home users can have a 32-bit true colour home computer with workstation performance at a price everybody can afford."

Silica Systems can be telephoned on 081-309 1111.

Faster maths for A1200

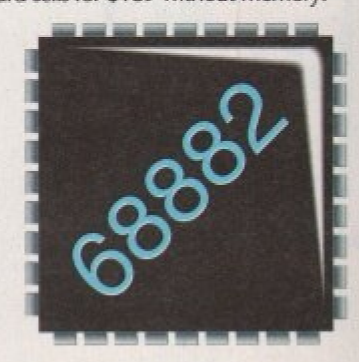
MICROBOTICS MBX 1200 is an A120[0] upgrade, giving owners a Motorola floati[ng] point unit and up to 8Mb of fast RAM.

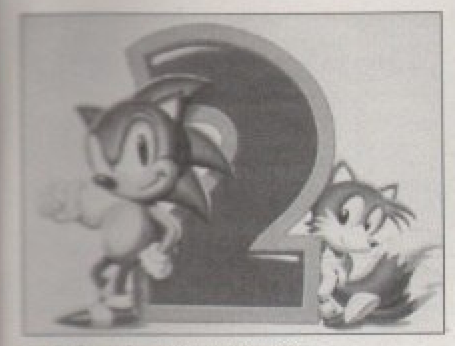
Fitting onto the A1200's internal expansi[on] connector, the board is claimed to speed [up] floating point operations by up to 55 tim[es] that of the standard machine.

Those who will see most benefit from t[he] board are users of memory and maths-inte[n]sive applications such as animation, ray-tra[c]ing, morphing, scientific calculation a[nd] image processing.

It is made by Texas-based MicroBotics (0[1]) 1 214 437 5330), but is available in Brita[in] from First Computer Centre (0532 319444).

Sterling prices were unavailable at the tim[e] of going to press, although in the States t[he] board sells for $189 without memory.





Sonic 2 carries epilepsy warnings

Epilepsy warnings played down

BRITISH doctors have played down warnings from two leading games console manufacturers and scares in national newspapers that light patterns used in video games could trigger epileptic fits.

Instructions supplied with Sega's Sonic 2 say that the video game may induce an epileptic seizure, and advises players to discontinue use if they feel certain conditions.

Sega say they issued the warnings to protect themselves against possible legal action, although the firm were unaware of cases of epileptic fits being caused by games.

Similar advice to Nintendo customers was given after one or two isolated incidents, a spokesman said.

But experts stress that games cannot cause epilepsy in people not affected by the condition, although they admit that light flashes in games played on some television sets could trigger fits.

Sue Cooper, spokeswomen for the British Epilepsy Association, said that there are up to 350,000 British epilepsy sufferers but fewer than 10,000 are sensitive to flashing lights.

"It's such a small proportion of sufferers that we don't consider it a problem," said Sue. She advised parents not to be put off buying video games for their children.

Children learn with graphics

CHILDREN between two and 12 years old are targeted for Childsplay, a new educational wordprocessor which can also be used for creating puzzles and graphical ideas.

Developed by Helios Software (0623 554828), colourful graphics can be mixed with text, and a dual-layered display enables letters to be overlaid onto a graphical backdrop.

Text is entered into the wordprocessor through the keyboard and various facilities are available for inserting and deleting individual letters or blocks of text.

Whole texts or single letters and words can then be recited using three voices contained in a computer speech facility.

Other features include the ability to alter or supplement the program's graphics, and a scrolling list of words that can be selected to allow progressive introduction to new vocabulary.

And the wordprocessor doubles up as a jigsaw puzzle. Full pictures can be used as a backdrop, over which kids may be taught to assemble jumbled set of blocks.

"Childsplay has an excellent flexibility of design which allows a parent or teacher to constantly recreate the program to keep pace with the learning process of the child," said a Helios spokesperson.

"It's immediately enjoyable, and even the smallest children can play with it creatively without any instruction. The program really excels, however, as a means for parents or teacher to provide children with progressive creative activities and puzzles."

Available now, Childsplay costs £24.95.

AA upgrades development

UPGRADES could soon be available to enable owners of 32-bit Amigas such as the A3000 to use the new AA graphics chip set.

A leading American developer is believed to be working on the device in conjunction with Commodore, although it is not known whether a working board yet exists. Details remain sketchy but we will give you more information as it becomes available.

Amiga hits the airwaves

THE world's first weekly radio show dedicated exclusively to Amiga enthusiasts is now broadcast across Europe every Tuesday on satellite station Euronet.

Available to 33 million homes with normal satellite receivers, Mouse Trap is a 30 minute programme of news, reviews and opinion on all things related to the Amiga.

It is the brainchild of television and radio broadcaster Chris Denning – who himself owns two Amigas – and will feature erstwhile *Amiga Computing* technical editor Jeff Walker.

The first programme in mid-December discussed the A4000 and contained an explanation of ISDN, the state-of-the-art service which allows video to be sent down telephone lines.

It is planned to run for at least two months, and providing the audience builds to a respectable level it will continue indefinitely.

Chris says one of Mouse Trap's main strengths will be its ability to launch Amiga products in every European country simultaneously.

"We've had availability of air-time for quite a while," says Chris. "At the moment it's used mainly for music, but we have found specialist shows work better on Sky."

"Mouse Trap feels more like a bulletin board than a radio show, and we envisage phone-ins with experts once it becomes established."

Transmitted at 9.30am, it is repeated at 5.30pm and Wednesday morning at 1.30am.

How to receive Mouse Trap

- *Tune your satellite receiver into Astra Transponder 20 (Sky Sports)*
- *Consult your satellite receiver's manual for instructions on how to change audio channels*
- *Tune in to audio channel 7.56MHz.*
- *If your satellite receiver is connected to your audio amplifier, turn your television set off and your amp on.*

Extra choice for CD-ROM

A RANGE of CDTV-compatible CD-ROM drives has just been launched for most Amigas by Almathera Systems (081-638 6418). Based on Toshiba SCSI CD drives, they are claimed to operate twice as fast as the CDTV and be more than 90 per cent compatible with CD-based Amiga software.

They enable A500 users to use compact discs without unplugging hard disks like the A590, and owners of A1500s, A2000s and A3000s can also use the drives.

Three CDs are included in the pack, among them Almathera's CDPD public domain collection featuring Fred Fish disks one to 660.

Prices are £395 for an internal kit and £495 for an external model. Supplied with a SCSI card, the drives cost an extra £100.

Shareware form eases registration

SUBSCRIBERS to CompuServe, the giant on-line information service, can now register for shareware programs through their modems.

By completing an on-line form, users can register for programs and have the charge billed to their account. CompuServe then forwards the fee – minus a small charge – to the author.

In addition to convenience, the service eliminates currency exchange problems found by shareware users who live in a different country than the author.

By typing a keyword such as Utilities or Games, users can view a list of programs by category, enabling them to easily find programs that suit their needs.

"Shareware authors who make their programs available in CompuServe forums will be encouraged to submit their programs to the registration database," said CompuServe's Martin Turner.

"Several hundred programs have already been submitted to the database, which is updated on a continuing basis." CompuServe can be telephoned on 0800 289378.



Easy shareware registration for modem users

Hard drives to go inside

INTERNAL hard disk drives with between 20 and 120Mb of storage capacity are now available for the A600 and A1200 from Bradford-based Trilogic (0274 691115).

A connecting cable is supplied and the disks fit straight into the Amiga's hard drive slot. Each is formatted ready to use and can be re-partitioned if required.

Trilogic claim the drives have a "very fast" access time and are quiet in use. Prices start at £119.99 for the 20Mb model, and range up to £349.99 for 120Mb.

Adorage adds video effects

GERMAN video effects software Adorage is now available to British Amiga users from Micro-Pace (0753 551888).

The package enables users to create many digital-like video effects for IFF graphics, as developed with paint packages such as Deluxe Paint IV.

It has more than 700 effects based on transitions, wipes and visual graphics, and features the Super Smooth Animation format, cutting jitter when complex animations are played back. Standard effects include mosaic, splinter, shatter, windmill ➤

News flashes

● ROMs can now be bought for Apple Macintosh emulators from Design by DiscGrace (0202 604104). The Poole-based firm sells Mac Plus 128k chips for £140 and all Mac II and LC ROMs for £303.15.

● THE first in a chain of Future Zone computer games stores was opened in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire recently, and there are already plans for a nationwide network of 130 shops.

Farnborough and Aberdeen will see the next stores and in each town where Future Zone opens there will be a massive publicity drive.

● SKY ONE are set to become the latest station to broadcast a games show, with a programme called The Game Zone due to be shown every weekday from March.

The show will be produced by Hewland International, the same firm that makes Channel 4's existing Gamesmaster. Each show will have its own theme such as cheats or new releases.

● LEEDS-based computer dealer First Choice Computers have been renamed First Computer Centre (0532 319444). The move follows the introduction of a larger product range and service.

● MOTOROLA are to extend their 68000 series of microprocessors with the release of a 68060 chip by the end of 1993. It is claimed that the processor will run at 100 millions of instructions per second.

● GREMLINS struck November's review of the Order v2 database. SouthHams Software's telephone number should be 0752 880906 and we apologise to our readers for the mistake.

● THE A3000 and Opal Vision competition published in last month's *Amiga Computing* was sponsored by Calculus Stores (0543 251275), and not the firm previously mentioned. The second part of the competition appears this month.

● CARRYING cases now available for A600s have enough space for peripherals and disks to be packed with the computer.

The grey holdalls are padded and feature Velcro fasteners. shoulder straps and rubber feet. Price: £14.95 from Silica Systems (081-309 1111).

and page-peel, and the distributor recommends the program is run on machines with 2Mb of memory.

Supplied with English documentation, Adorage costs £79.99.

Book gives Amos tips

IDEAS, tips and inside information on how to get the best results from Amos are contained in a new book just published by Kuma Computers (0734 844339).

Amos In Action also contains details and opinions on the add-on packages available for the top Amiga programming language, and advice on getting your games published.

The book was written by programmer Len Tucker and is supplied with a coupon to enable readers to obtain a free games disk. Price: £12.95 (ISBN 07457 0221 X).

Growing with AmigaDOS

EXTRA pages have been added to *Mastering AmigaDOS Volume One*, Bruce Smith Books' (0923 894355) guide to the Amiga's operating system.

New chapters include Commodities, and Fountain and Pipes, and other revisions bring the book up to date with the latest versions of AmigaDOS.

Written by Bruce Smith and Mark Smiddy, the 416-page book keeps its £21.95 price tag. Its ISBN number is 1-873308-10-8.

Epson improve their scanning

HB MARKETING (0753 686000) have been appointed as a distributor for Epson's GT6500 colour A4 flatbed scanner – the successor to the GT6000.

Using driver software from ASDG, images can be scanned into any Amiga for incorporating into desktop publishing or desktop video applications.

It has a colour output resolution of up to 1,200 dots per inch, and can also handle line art, and 256 greyscale images for mono work and computer-aided design.

The £938 scanner also has an optional sheet feeder for bulk optical character recognition work and can use an adaptor for scanning transparencies and reflective materials.

Said Epson's Tony Petford: "We encourage customers to question the logic of buying a mono scanner when they can have a quality colour scanner with comparable mono capabilities at a similar price."

Meanwhile, ASDG (010 1 608 273 6585) have announced that their latest Epson scanner driver now supports two extra colour machines – the ES600C and ES800C.



GT6500 – Epson's successor to the GT6000

Utilities grow for video card

SOFTWARE supplied with leading multi-purpose video card IV24 is soon to be upgraded, and an extra two programs will be included with the package.

New utilities will include a dedicated frame grabber called Mylad, and Digital Darkroom, an effects package for producing wipes, fades and transitions.

Paint program Macro Paint, meanwhile, is promised several new features, and will run much faster.

Silica Systems (081-309 1111) have not finalised upgrade details, but they will appear in our Updates pages once they are released.

Watch and learn

A VIDEO just launched by Manchester-based Crystal Concepts (0942 523387) aims to teach newcomers to modem communications how to get started. The one-

Cheaper drives for CDTV

CALCULUS Computer Stores (0543 251275) are offering CDTV owners Datapac 65Mb external hard disk drives at a special launch price of £349.99.

Housed in a black impact resistant box, the front panel has power on and hard drive access indicators . At the back there are two SCSI sockets – one of them for daisy chaining up to seven SCSI devices – a device number selector and power on/off switch.

The drive is supplied with an Encore SCSI controller and installation disk, a SCSI connector cable for linking Datapac to the CDTV and Workbench 1.3 disks.


Discounted hard drives for CDTV

Naked mice roam the City

THE latest craze in the City's foreign exchange dealing rooms are see-through mice, claims manufacturer Spectravideo (081-902 2211).

The company says that television coverage during the recent ERM crisis showed naked rodents on dealers' desks, and now they have added an Amiga model to their Datalux range.

It has enlarged trigger buttons, and is claimed to have a high degree of sensitivity, accuracy and smoothness. Price: £22.99.


Clear mice – the latest craze with dealers

AMIGA A1200 PACKAGE £389

Our A1200's are also available with fully prepared and formatted internal IDE hard disk drives. Please add the following prices for the size of the disk drive that you require:-

20MB	£110
40MB	£180
120MB	£260
240MB	£450
330MB	£580
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Joystick comes from outer space

CHEETAH (0222 8967777) have unveiled Argostick, the latest member of their FuturiStick range of Amiga joysticks.

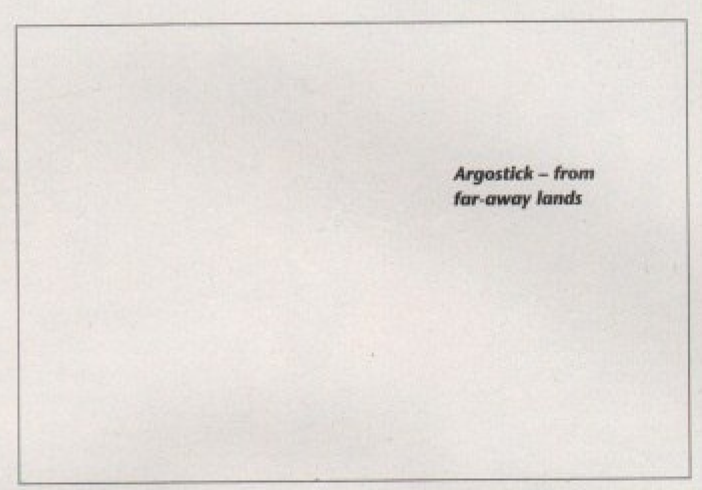
It has been designed so that it resembles machinery you would expect to see roaming the far-away land of some forbidden planet light years into the future.

However, it retains all usual joystick features, including automatic fire and several Fire buttons.

"The shape and texture has been carefully sculptured to provide ultimate comfort and control for the most serious games players," said a Cheetah spokesperson.

"Cheetah's attention to detail is highly respected in the market place, but even the company's biggest fans will enthuse over the Argostick."

Two versions of the joystick are available, one costing £12.99 and a microswitch model with a £14.99 price tag.



Argostick – from far-away lands

hour video shows beginners how to set up software, how to download files from bulletin boards, and how to get the best from the boards once they have logged on.

It also says which archivers will get the downloaded files up and running, and contains 150 bulletin board telephone numbers and four software titles.

These include NComm2, SID, PKAzip and LHArc, already set up and ready to run. A three-month free subscription is also available with one of Britain's leading bulletin boards. Crystal Concept boss Mr Blundell, said: "We believe that with this package it is now possible for someone with absolutely no experience whatever to get into comms.

"They will be saved the hassle and frustration most beginners experience when logging on to boards." Price: £28.95.

Zone help opens

A LEADING distributor of Amiga music equipment have now opened up their technical support lines for all musicians.

Non-Zone Distribution (071-738 5444) customers will be asked to pay a small registration fee, but they will then be offered unbiased technical and buying advice.

Technical help found online

TECHNICAL advice is now offered free to Silica Systems (081-309 1111) customers through a bulletin board just set up by the firm.

Mailboxes are available for many types of popular computer including the Amiga, and technical support staff monitor the board frequently during the day.

In addition to finding answers to technical problems, the system can also be used for downloading latest software upgrades such as printer drivers and public domain programs.

It operates 24 hours a day, and the dealer are currently looking at ways of setting up an online ordering service.

"We are continuously looking for ways to improve our support and service to our customers," said Silica spokesman Andy Leaning.

"We have offered telephone and fax support for some time and this new bulletin board extends the service further."

To access the Silica bulletin board at up to 2,400 baud, modem users should dial 081-309 5255. The protocols are 8 N 1.

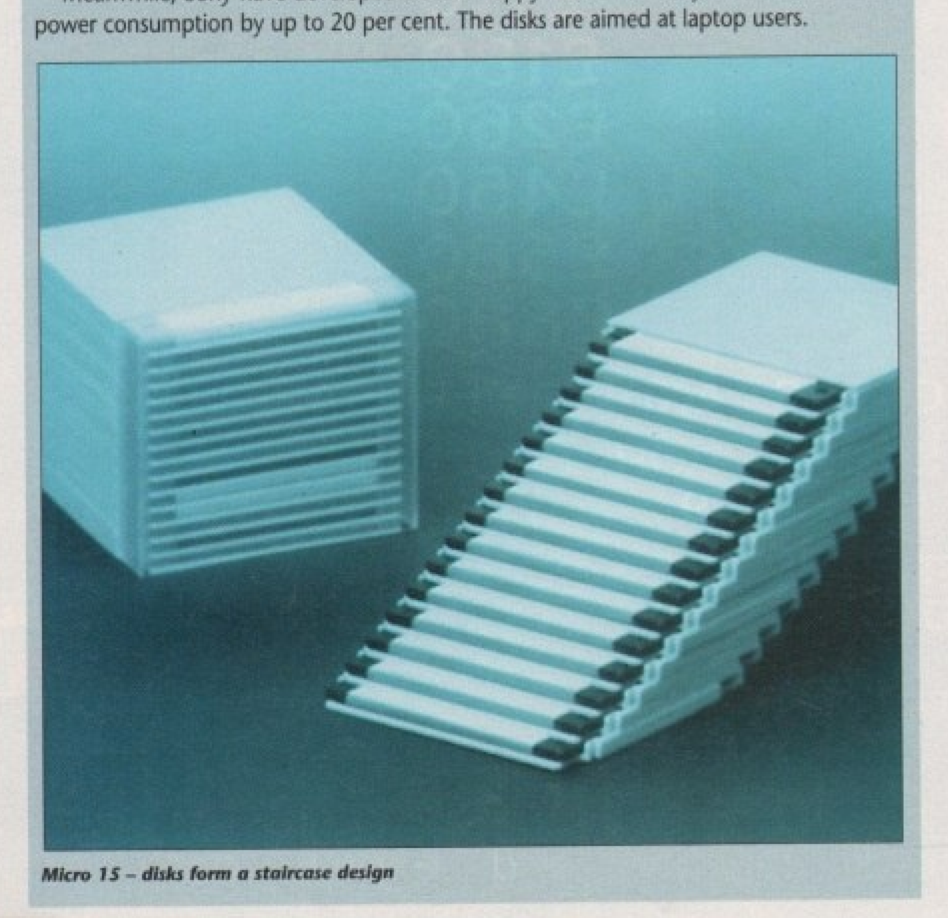
Cubes fill with disks

TWO new low-cost 3.5in disk storage systems are now available from Action Computer Supplies (071-586 3429).

Officedata Micro 15 is a cube which can hold up to 15 disks. It can be pushed from a cube to staircase design, allowing disks to be selected easily. A pack of six cubes costs £19.95.

The more conventional Officedata Datafile 10 is an easel-opening storage box which holds up to ten disks. It costs £22.95 for a pack of eight boxes.

Meanwhile, Sony have developed a 3.5in floppy disk which they claim reduces drive power consumption by up to 20 per cent. The disks are aimed at laptop users.



Micro 15 – disks form a staircase design

DO YOU KNOW SOMETHING WE DON'T?

Although *Amiga Computing* has scores of contacts in the Amiga world we need you. If you have some hot news ring John Butters on the news desk now on 0625 878888 or fax to 0625 879966. All information supplied will be treated in the strictest of confidence.

DIARY DATES

19 to 21 February 1993
7th International Computer Show
Organiser: Westminster Exhibitions
(081-549 3444)
Venue: Wembley, London
An *Amiga Computing*-sponsored all formats event.

25 to 28 March 1993
Ideal Electronic Games Show
Organiser: Ideal Home Exhibition
(061-432 2642)
Venue: Earls Court, London
A new section added to the Ideal Home Exhibition.

4 to 6 April 1993
European Computer Trade Show
Organiser: Blenheim
(081-742 2828)
Venue: Business Design Centre, London
New software and hardware is previewed to the industry. No public admission.

23 to 25 April 1993
Midi Music Show
Organiser: Westminster Exhibitions
(081-549 3444)
Venue: Wembley Exhibition Centre
Catch up with the latest Midi products.

16 to 20 September 1993
Live '93
Organiser: News International
(071-782 6000)
Venue: Olympia, London
A public consumer electronics show. Commodore plan to attend.

OVERSEAS

7 to 10 January 1993
Consumer Electronics Show
Organiser: (010 1 202 4578700)
Venue: Las Vegas, USA
Support from Commodore and leading games houses.

24 to 31 March 1993
CeBit
Organiser: Deutsche Messe
(010 49 511890)
Venue: Hanover, Germany
A massive electronics show which has been used for the launch of many new products including the A600.

● *If your company is organising a show relevant to the Amiga and it's not listed, let us know so we can include the information in the diary.*

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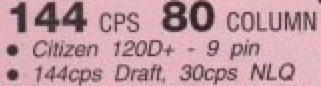
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BUDGET 9 PIN PRINTER



144 CPS 80 COLUMN

- Citizen 120D+ - 9 pin
- 144cps Draft, 30cps NLQ
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- Graphics Resolution: 240 x 240dpi
- Epson and IBM Emulation
- Pull tractor & bottom feed
- FREE Silica Printer Starter Kit

RRP £199
SILICA STARTER KIT £25
TOTAL VALUE: £224
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SILICA PRICE: £115

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The Citizen 120D printer comes supplied with a parallel interface as standard. If you require a serial interface instead, please state ref: PRI 2125 when placing your order with Silica.

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For Swift 9, 24, 24e, 200, 240 and 224 Printers

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- Saves space and protects continuous stationery from dust and damage
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RRP ~~£23~~ EXC

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9 PIN PRINTERS





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- Citizen Swift 9 - 9 pin - 80 column
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- 8K Printer Buffer + 3 Fonts
- Parallel Interface
- Graphics Resolution: 240 x 240dpi
- Epson and IBM Emulation
- FREE Colour Kit
- FREE Silica Printer Starter Kit

RRP £239
COLOUR KIT £38
STARTER KIT £25
TOTAL VALUE: £302
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SILICA PRICE: £159

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- Citizen Swift 9x - 9 pin - 136 column
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STARTER KIT £25
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24 PIN PRINTER



NEW! SWIFT 2 SERIES

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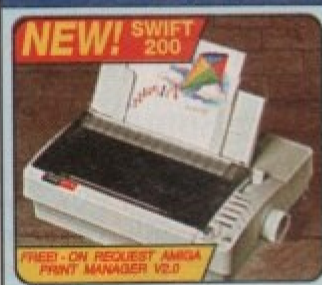
£239 +VAT= £280.83 ref: PRI 2560

SWIFT 240C COLOUR

RRP £359
STARTER KIT £25
TOTAL VALUE: £384
SAVING: £125
SILICA PRICE: £259

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24 PIN PRINTERS



270 CPS 80 COLUMN

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- Parallel Interface
- 6 LQ Fonts
- Graphics Resolution: 360 x 360 dpi
- Epson, IBM, & NEC P20 Emulations
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192 CPS 136 COLUMN

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- Parallel Interface
- Graphics Resolution: 360 x 360dpi
- Epson, IBM and NEC P6 Emulation
- Colour Option Available
- FREE Silica Printer Starter Kit

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SILICA STARTER KIT £25
TOTAL VALUE: £514
SAVING: £215
SILICA PRICE: £299

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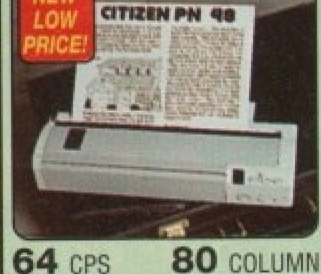
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RRP £325
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32K MEMORY EXPN

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PRINTER STAND

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PRA 1274	Swift 9X/24X	£36.66

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RIB 3949	Swift 9x Black	£7.15
RIB 3924	124D/Swift 24 Black	£4.70
RIB 3936	224/Swift 9/24 Colour	£15.63
RIB 3248	PN48 Single Strike	£3.61
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COLOUR KITS

PRA 1236	224/Swift 9/24e/200/240	£35.25
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PN48 ACCESSORIES

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Denny Atkin reports on the latest developments from the USA

North American Amigans lusting after Commodore's new A1200 could flirt with the machine, but not take it home, at the World of Commodore-Amiga show held in Toronto, Ontario on December 4 to 6, 1992.

The Amiga 1200 was on display in a number of dealer's booths, but wasn't yet available for sale. Commodore was promising machines for the US before Christmas, but couldn't commit to a 1992 release in Canada.

Interestingly, it seems that Canadian A1200s will have the UK-style keyboard with the small Return key and two blank keys, while the US machines will have keyboard with full-sized Left Shift and Return keys and no blanks. It's unusual for the two countries to end up with different configurations.

The crowd was a bit smaller and more subdued compared than in past years, which is unusual given Commodore's new releases and the increased attendance at US shows this year. The exhibitors were enthusiastic, though, and were happily showing off their wares.

Hot stuff

There weren't many completely new products, as most manufacturers had at least previewed their new programs at the World of Commodore show in Pasadena earlier this year, but there was some hot stuff on display.

One of the big hits of the show was Digital Creations' Brilliance, the 24-bit paint program. Brilliance supports all AGA screen modes and stores data in 24-bits internally.

This means you can load in a 24-bit picture and touch it up, even on a classic ECS Amiga, and not lose any colour information or detail. The company had just got the HAM8 version of the program up and running for the show, so it looked like they were going to miss their December ship date.

It should be available soon after you read this, though, if it's not already.

Gold Disk was showing the new Professional Page 4.0, which was almost complete. Along with 256-colour screen support on AGA Amigas, this update also adds a font previewer, visual letter-pair kerning, a free paint program (the creators of DPaint and Brilliance need not feel threatened), a page-sorter, and a number of new Genies (special ProPage ARexx macros).

ProPage has got a bit better at talking to the outside world, with new text import modules and a much wider range of graphics import filters including GIF, TIF, PCX, BMP, Adobe Illustrator, Aldus Freehand, and of course IFF and Professional Draw. The price is still $295, and the upgrade fee to v4.0 is $75 U.S.

INOVAtronics demonstrated Directory Opus v4.0, a vastly improved version of their popular directory utility. It had better be improved, as the retail price has jumped up to $99, with a $40 upgrade fee from previous versions (more than some people paid for their original version!).

Along with a new, cleaner interface, Directory Opus v4.0 now supports AGA screen modes (for both running the program and displaying pictures); Noisetracker, SoundTracker, Protracker, MED (with Midi!), Oktalyzer, 8SVX, and RAW sound files; and Anim and AnimBrush playback in AGA modes.

The program is now an AppWindow when run under AmigaDOS 2 or greater – you can, for instance, load a disk into Opus Window simply by grabbing the disk icon and dragging it onto the Opus window.

This is a pricey upgrade, but with every feature imaginable crammed into it, it certainly looks to be worth the money.

Worth the wait

Soft-Logik is finally shipping Art Expression, their structured drawing program that supports EPS, ProDraw, and DR2D formats. Over three years in the making, the program is well worth the wait, and promises to bring new flexibility to Amiga graphic artists.

The company also showed their new TypeSmith program, an outline font editor that supports PostScript Type 1, Soft-Logik DMF, and Compugraphic Intellifonts.

No longer are you limited to using one font with one program and having to go out and buy the same font in a different format for use with another – TypeSmith will easily convert between all the formats it supports.

It will even let you load in Amiga bitmap fonts or IFF pictures and trace over them! A full set of drawing tools and automatic kerning features will delight the desktop typographer.

Look for some great PD and shareware fonts after TypeSmith hits the market in January at a suggested retail price of $199.95.

Rumours

Commodore's Lew Eggebrecht spilled the beans on new chipset developments, whetting Amiga users' appetites for future 24-bit machines (see my Pasadena show report for more details).

Even more interesting, though, were rumoured products that were supposedly discussed in more private settings by Commodore representatives. There was talk of the already-known SCSI-II controller for the A4000 and the AT&T DSP module, which are apparently set to ship in the first quarter of 1993, but even more interesting were rumours of both a 68030 and less-expensive 68EC030 model of the Amiga 4000 that would appear early next year along with the A4000 tower.

These machines could be just the thing for folks who want more power than the A1200 can provide but who can't foot the bill for an A4000/040.

Other interesting rumours included a PCMCIA 386SX emulator for the A600 and A1200 developed by a third-party in co-operation with CBM, full-motion video software for the Amiga operating system, and future support of the Kodak Photo CD format.

Vista gets more colourful sunsets

A long-awaited upgrade to VistaPro is getting ready to ship from Virtual Reality Laboratories, Inc. The company provided me with a beta version to preview for this column, and it looks hot (check out the accompanying screenshots).

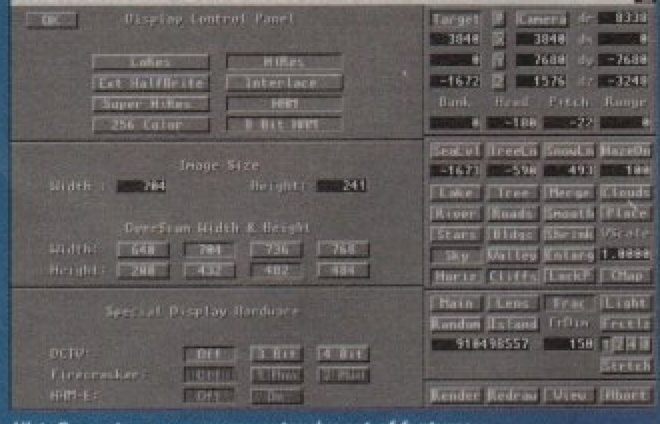
VistaPro 3.0 will now render pictures in 256-colour or HAM8 modes on the Amiga 1200 and 4000. Support has also been added for the 1,280-pixel wide super hi-res mode.

The improvement in picture quality in this version is amazing – the HAM8 output looks as good as true 24-bit output (AGA isn't required, though – the old modes are still supported.)

The program's tree-generation capabilities have been dramatically improved – you can now place pine, oak, and palm trees, as well as cacti, in your landscape. The program will also generate grass in a number of different textures.

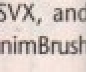
A new Place panel lets you manually place simple buildings and roads on your landscape, as well as trees and grass.

The new Altitude texture gives you detailed pictures even when you set your camera view very close to a small patch of terrain. The cloud generation in VistaPro 3.0 makes for more realistic scenes – you can now generate clouds randomly, as well as adjust their density and thickness. Enhanced ARexx support makes script-based animation even easier.


VistaPro gets an even more extensive set of features

Actual picture rendering is much faster, as several critical short routines have been re-coded in Assembly language (you'll still like this program best if you're running a faster Amiga, though).

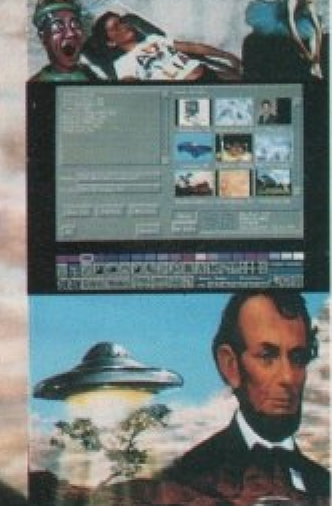
Even with the new features, the program still retails for $99.95. If fractal landscapes are your thing, check this out.





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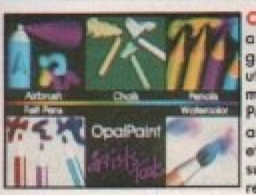
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Amiga Computing November 1992

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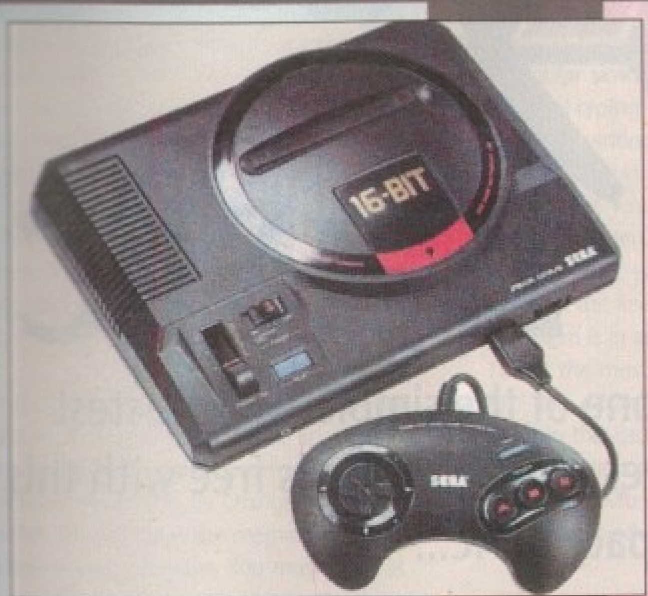
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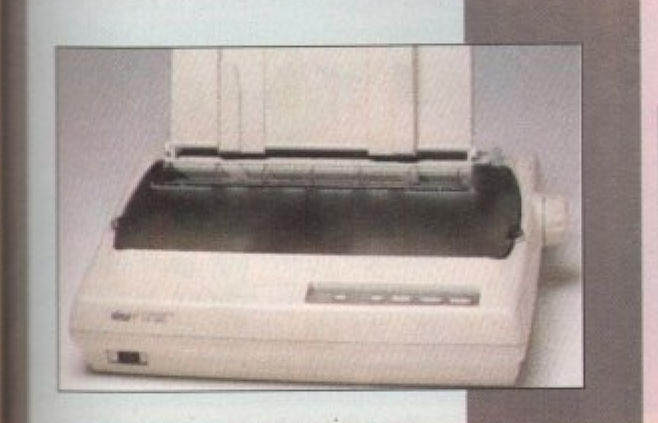
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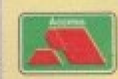
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the DISK

HiSoft Basic

Take control of your Amiga with one of the simplest and fastest programming languages around – yes, HiSoft's Basic is free with this month's value-packed *AC*...

In the vast Amiga world out there are quiet a few versions of Basic, but none quiet as easy to use and powerful as HiSoft Basic. One of the main advantages of Basic is its easy to understand commands which makes programming much more simple.

Unfortunately, though, most Basics are extremely slow. This is due to the fact that the computer has to turn each command in Basic into something which it understands before it can move to the next command in the program.

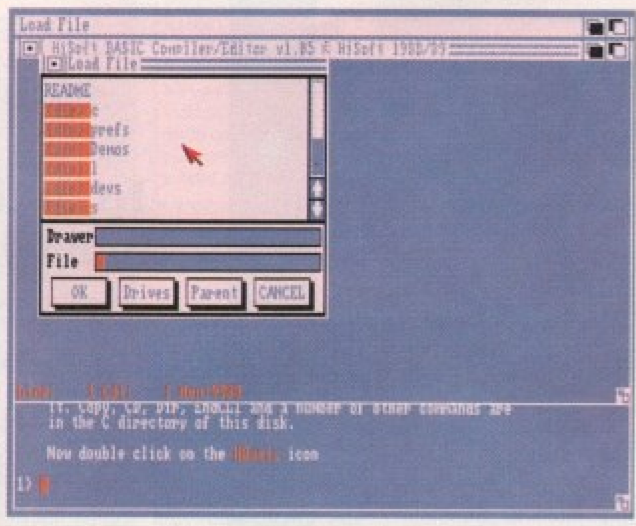
This process slows it down a considerable amount, so to get a Basic program to work at a more reasonable speed it has to be turned into something which the computer can understand more easily, which in turn will speed up the Amiga's running of initially Basic programs.

Compiling

The process of converting basic programs into something which the computer understands is called compiling. HiSoft Basic has two main programs – HiSoft Basic, which is the integrated editor and compiler, and HB.Compiler, which is the compiler itself (required by the editor).

When you want to start programming you only need to load the HiSoft Basic program and not the HB.compiler. This is because when you program with HiSoft it always compiles the program for you and then runs it. This makes HiSoft one of the fastest Basic programming packages around.

To use HiSoft Basic you have to reset your Amiga and place the CoverDisk which contains HiSoft in the disk drive – it will auto-boot. Once loaded, click on the HiSoft Basic Editor icon, which is main part of the program.



HiSoft uses the same easy-to-use layout as Workbench

Editing programs is a doddle

Once loaded you are presented with the main editing area which at the moment is blank. If you now hold down your right mouse button you will see several menus appear at the top of the screen.

One of the main advantages of HiSoft is its compatibility with other Basic packages. This means that you can load, say, an Amiga Basic program into HiSoft and compile and run it. This also means you can export HiSoft programs into most other Basic packages.

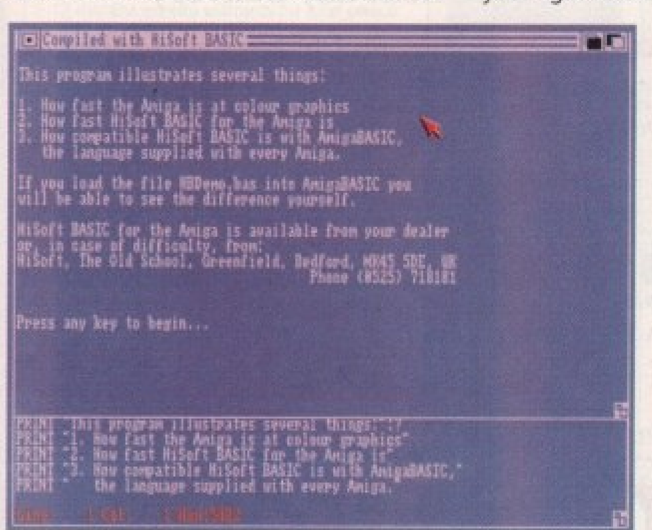
HiSoft is compatible with all Amigas with Kickstart 1.2 or higher. Obviously the more memory you have the easier programming will be – it is also handy to have an extra disk drive but this is not essential.

There are four pull-down menus altogether which are Project, Search, Options and Program. HiSoft acts rather like a wordprocessor enabling you to edit your programs with ease.

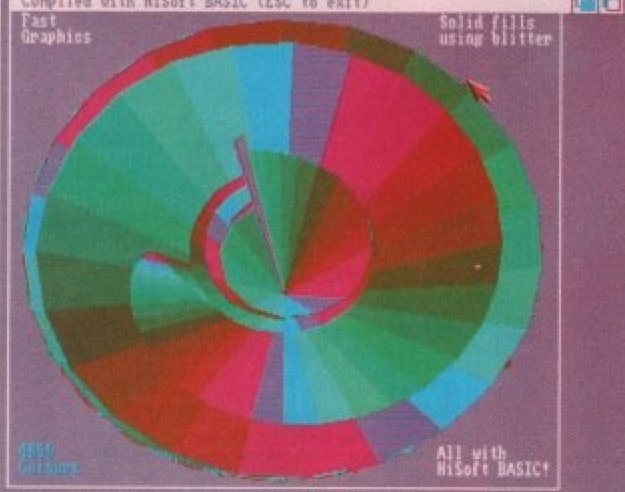
Fast

We will now load one of the demos on the CoverDisk to see how easy it is and how fast HiSoft really is. First of all pull-down the Project menu and select the Load option. You will then be presented with the file requester. Click on the demos drawer and then double click on the triangles.bas file.

You will now have a program called tri-



Once compiled your programs run much faster



With HiSoft Basic fast graphics becomes a reality

angles.bas on-screen. This program when run will draw coloured triangles to make patterns. If you now pull down the Program menu and select Run, HiSoft will compile "triangles" and then run it. To stop it, just press the Esc button and you will be returned to the listing.

You will notice how fast this program runs. If you were to load the same program into Amiga Basic it would run considerably slower.

When you load certain programs you may get an error telling you that the text buffer is not large enough for the program you are trying to load. This does not mean you have run out of memory, but that the standard preset of 10,000 bytes is not large enough.

You can set the text buffer by pulling down the Options menu and selecting Prefs. You can then type in the amount you wish to reserve for the buffer.

Buffer

If you already have a program in memory and have run out of text buffer space, you must save your program before trying to increase the buffer, as changing the text buffer size will clear the memory and you will lose your program. You must leave at least 100k for the system to operate in.

As mentioned earlier, HiSoft's main advantage is its ability to compile Basic programs to make them run much faster. If you have a Basic program loaded and you wish to compile it, you can do this in two ways. To compile something, go to the Program menu and select Compile. You will then be asked if you want to compile to disk or memory.

If you select Compile To Memory, it will compile the program and allow you to run it. This is the quickest way to compile something, and it is also ideal for trying things out and debugging programs.

When you select Compile To Disk, HiSoft Basic will compile the program and save it to disk. If you have not previously saved the program, HiSoft will call it NONAME. The compiled version will have the extension .bas.

When you have compiled a program to disk it becomes a standalone program which you can then run by double clicking on its icon from Workbench, but the program will need the hisoftbasic.library file to run.

Whenever you're doing any type of work with your computer it is a good practice to save out regularly, but more so when doing programming as the computer tends to crash more often if you haven't de-bugged your program properly. Regular saving of your work will save you a lot of typing!

If you are writing a new program which when run puts up a error message, HiSoft will ask you if you wish to continue running the program. Until you are familiar with HiSoft Basic you should reply with N, then go to the line which HiSoft tells you the problem is in and rectify it.

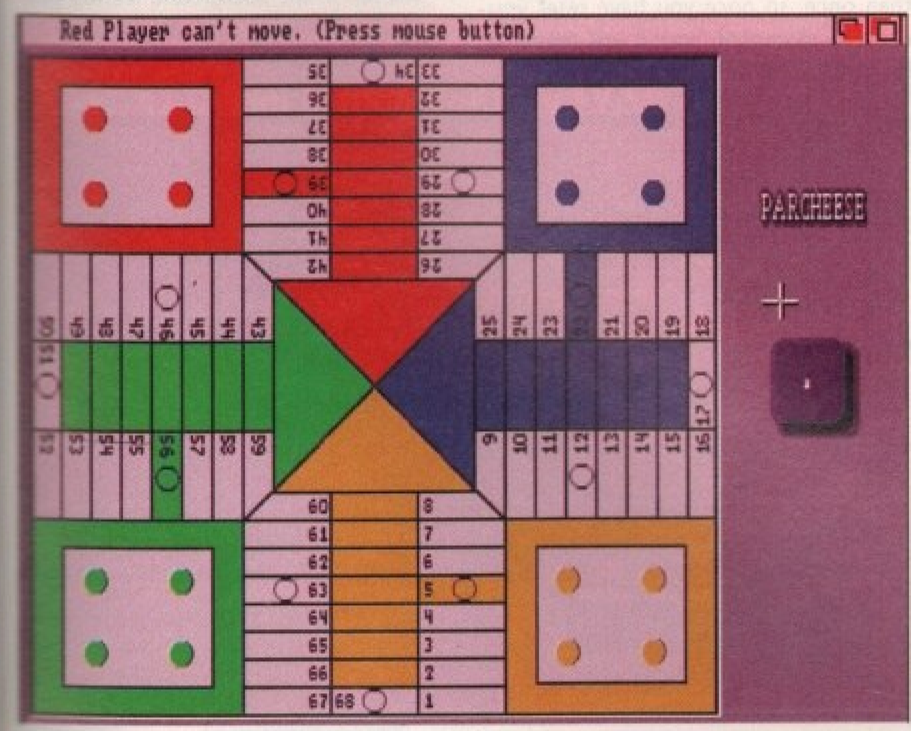
To get the most out of HiSoft Basic you should take advantage of our reader manual offer in this issue. With the manual you also get a version of HiSoft Basic specifically designed for 1Mb Amigas enabling you to use some more advanced features.

ParCheese

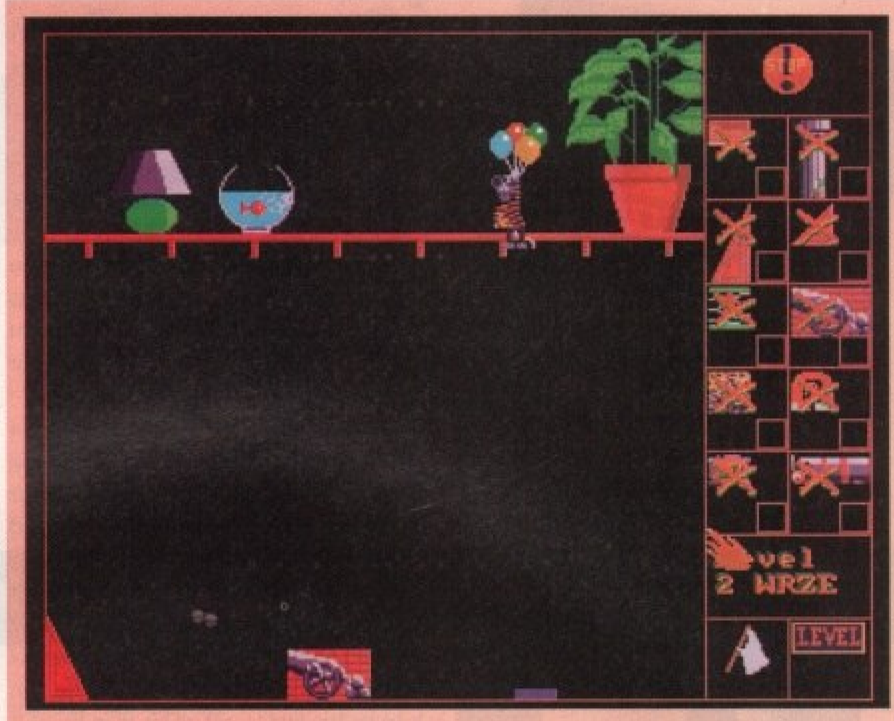
Author: Xavier Egusquiea

This game is a cross between Frustration and Ludo. The main idea is to get all of your markers safely around the board to your home base.

You can play with up to three other players or against the computer. Before you start you have to pull down the Players menu and select which colour you wish to be, then select who you want to play. If you select the computer you must also select which level you wish to play the computer on and what colour the computer is. The computer can play for several opponents. Once you have selected who's ➤



Ludo Amiga style



Oh no – he's nicking my cheese

Mouse Impossible

Author: Steve Holt

Mouse Impossible is a Lemmings-style game where the main object is to stop the mouse from stealing your cheese. This may sound a simple task but it's definitely not.

There are a total of 30 levels for you to try to complete and with each level the task becomes harder and harder. Once Mouse Impossible is loaded, saving your cheese is the name of the game.

A mouse will try to float down to your cheese and steal it using a bunch of balloons. Once he has the cheese, a cannon starts to fire across the screen and you have to put various obstacles in the cannon's way to deflect the shots towards the mouse, making him drop the cheese.

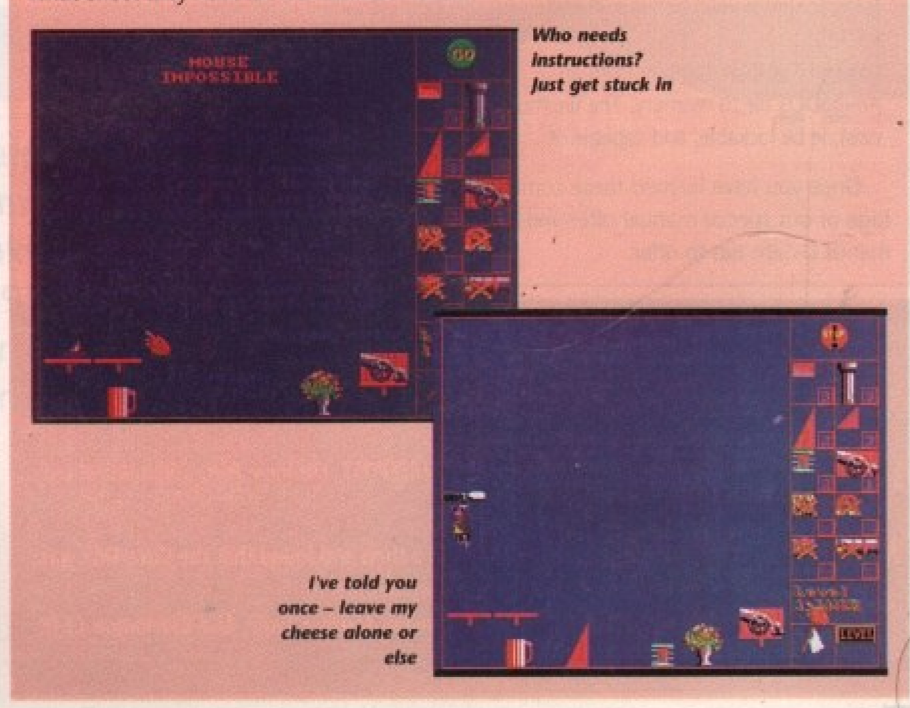
When the mouse begins his descent you must place obstacles in the path of the cannon. You can only place the obstacles while the mouse is descending, so it's best to think about the level before trying it.

You place the obstacles, which are on the right edge of the screen, by clicking on them with your left mouse button then putting them where you think they should be, finally clicking the left mouse button again.

While you are holding the obstacle you can click the right mouse button to turn it around – this makes the obstacle deflect the cannon's shots differently.

When you complete each level you are given an end-of-level code, so when you play the game again you don't have to do the levels which you've already done before.

This game requires some skill in judging where to put the obstacles and the best bet is to study the level hard first, and try turning some of the obstacles over to see what effect they have on the cannon's shots.



Who needs instructions? Just get stuck in

I've told you once – leave my cheese alone or else



playing and what colours they're using, it's time to start the game, so pull down the project menu and select Start.

The computer will then ask the player who is to go first – click the mouse button to roll the dice. You can't start to move your players until you roll a six.

When you've managed to roll a six you can then select which one of your men is about to start his trip home, then you roll the dice again to see how far your man is to move.

If you roll a six you can move six places then roll again, but if you get a six three times or more then one of your men must go back to the beginning and start again.

If your opponent lands on one of your men then that man must return back to the beginning and wait until another six is thrown before starting again. The aim is to be the first to get all his men home.

D-Sam

Author: AZ Software

D-Sam is an extension for Amos, giving you an extra 46 sound-related commands. Before you can use these extra commands you have to install them into Amos, which is a very simple procedure – just follow these instructions:

- Copy the file "D-Sam.lib" to your Amos system directory
- Run the Config_1.3. Amos program from Amos
- Load the default configuration
- Set loaded extension number 15 to ":Amos_System/D-Sam.lib"
- Select Save configuration menu

The D-Sam.lib is in the Utilities/D-Sam drawer. Once you have followed these simple steps you will have the 46 new commands built in to Amos. The new commands are all designed to make it easier for you to create programs using music and samples.

With the extra D-Sam commands fitted into your copy of Amos you can play back samples and music directly from floppy or hard disk, which enables you to save memory, or you can load the samples into memory first then play them back.

To start using D-Sam you only need to learn five commands:

SMP OPEN <samplenum>,<"filename">
(samplenum is valid between 0 and 65,535)
Opens IFF or RAW samples for playback direct from disk file.

SMP LOAD <samplenum>,<"filename">
(samplenum is valid between 0 and 65,535)
Loads IFF or RAW samples from an AmigaDOS file to memory. The file must exist, ie be lockable, and capable of supporting a seek() call.

SMP PLAY <samplenum>,<channels>
(channel is valid between 1 and 15)
This plays a sample (num) on the channels specified.

SMP CLOSE <samplenum>
(samplenum is valid between 0 and 65,535)

SMP RESET Stops all channels playing, frees all channels and closes all opened samples.

Once you have learned these commands, you would be well advised to take advantage of our special manual offer and start learning and using the more powerful commands D-Sam has to offer.

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CAG

Author: Marco AG Pinto

CAG is a utility for making your own adventure games. This may sound complicated but it's actually quiet easy, assuming you've sat and planned your adventure out first – this stops you getting in a muddle later on.

Included in the CAG drawer is full documentation on how to use CAG. There are also some demos for you to look at. If you get stuck just take a peek at the examples. Note that although there is a menu for sound, this is not supported as yet.

MidiPlayer

Author: Paul Overaa

MidiPlayer is a CLI command used for playing standard Midi files out to your Midi instruments without the need to load a Midi sequencer. It can be used in your startup sequence to play your favourite compositions every time you reboot your machine.

To use MidiPlayer just type in:

```
MidiPlayer path:songname
```

If you use it in your startup sequence then you must type it in as follows.

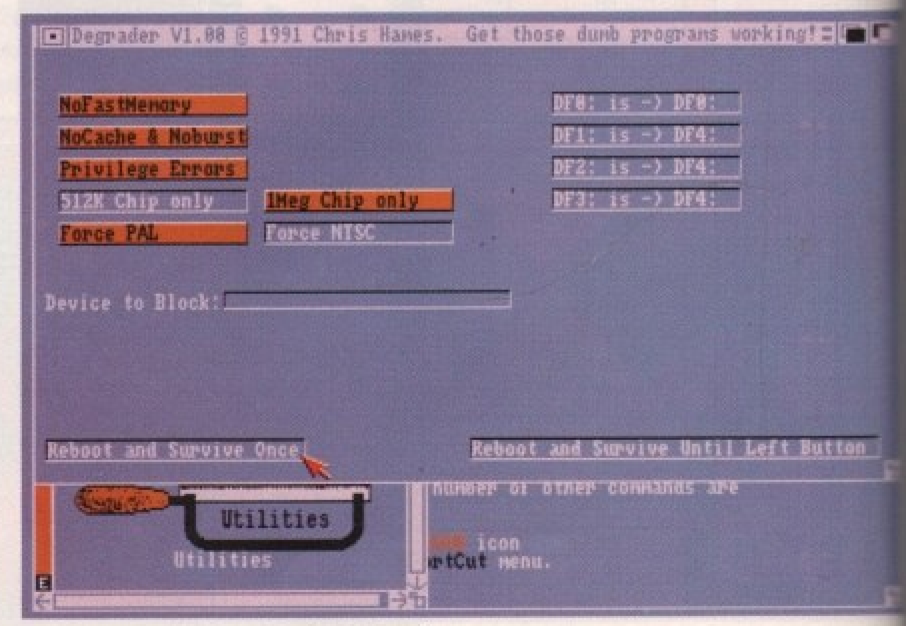
```
run >nil: <nil: midiplayer path:songname
```

Degrader

Author: Chris Hames

Degrader is a special software utility to help people with WorkBench2.0 compatibility problems. It temporarily degrades a WorkBench 2.0 machine to a 1.3 to enable you to use software intended for use on the 1.3 machines.

When degrader is used it will only degrade the machine until it is reset more than once, so once you have reset you machine more than once it will return to its original WorkBench2.0 status.



Solve your compatibility problems with Degrader

CAG's simple to use menus at work

Shareware needs you!

Please remember that many of the program distributed on the *Amiga Computing* CoverDisk are shareware releases. This means that the authors have kindly allowed you, the reader, to sample the program before paying for it.

If you decide to keep a program and intend to use it regularly, you should register as a shareware user with the author. Full details on how to register can be found, where appropriate, in the on-disk documentation.

Shareware authors, if they don't receive enough registrations, will eventually stop releasing programs to the public, which would dry up an indispensible supply of superb software. Keep the faith, and keep sending those fivers!

Tune of the month

Author: Torch

This month's tune, Duelling_banjos, can be heard by either double clicking on its icon or selecting it from the short-cut menu. Once started the tune will run in the background leaving you to do something else, maybe a bit of painting in DPaint...

Here's a couple of offers you can't ignore...

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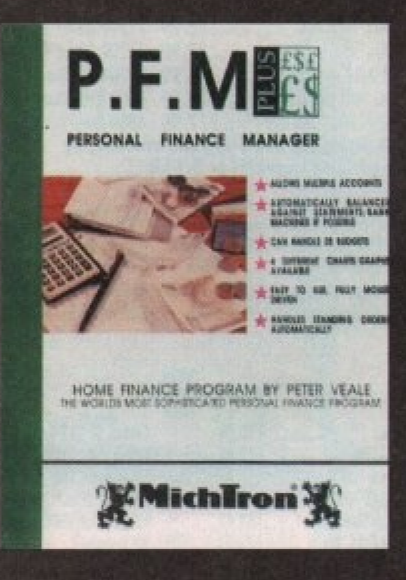
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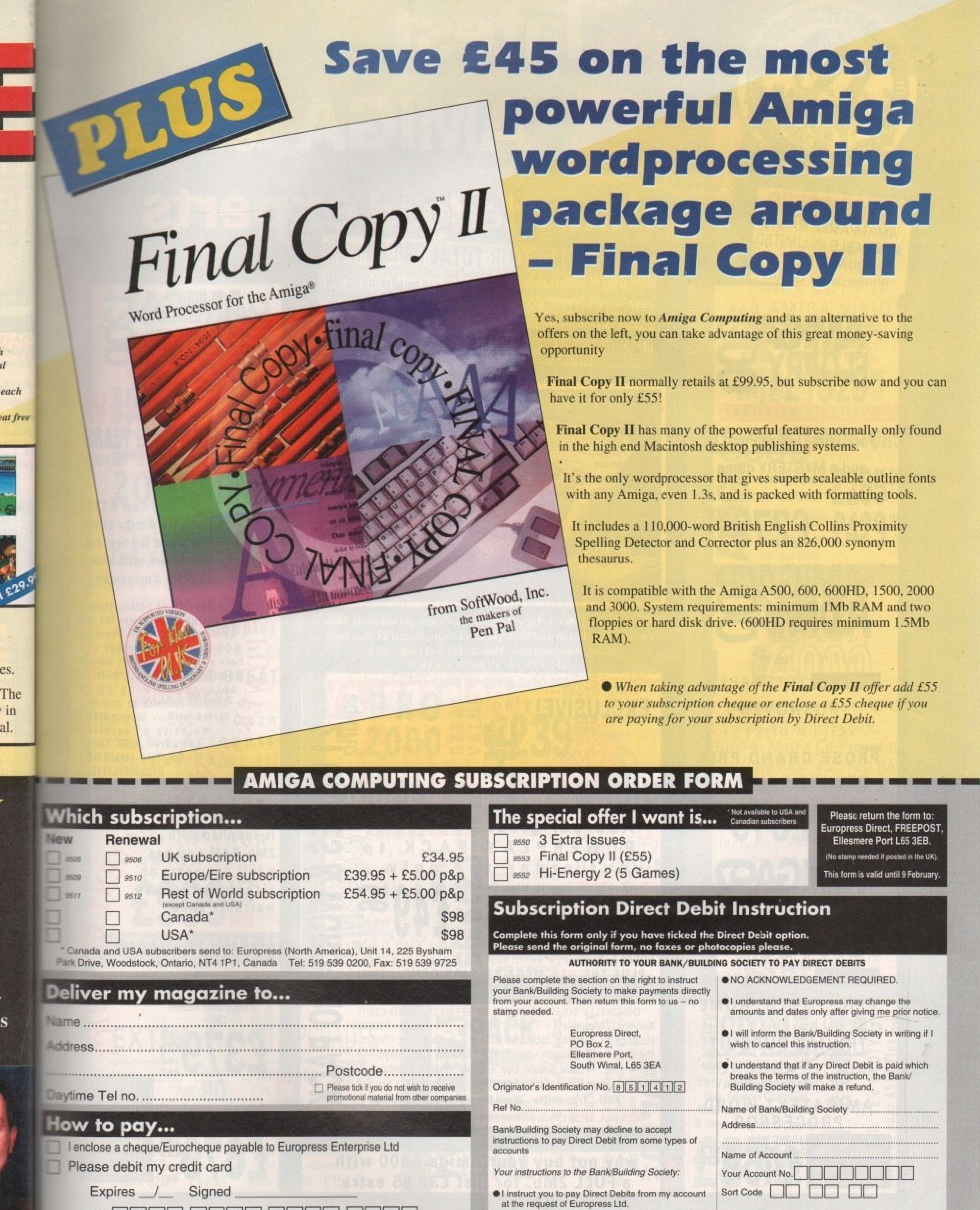
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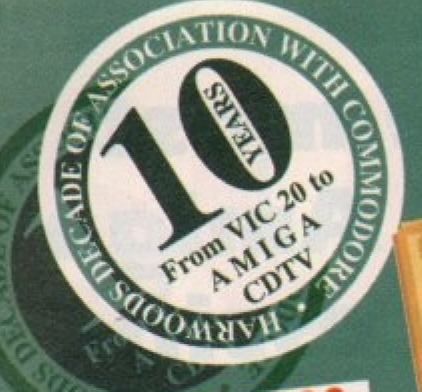


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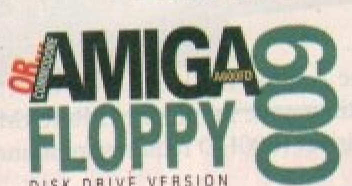
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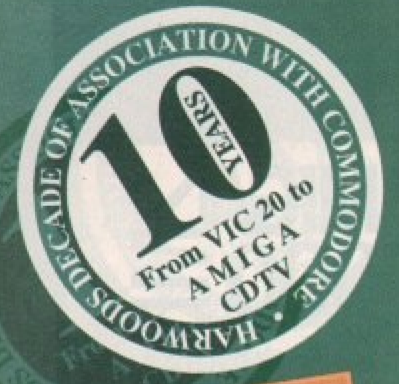
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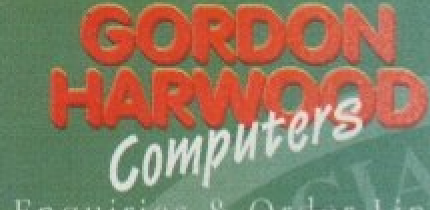
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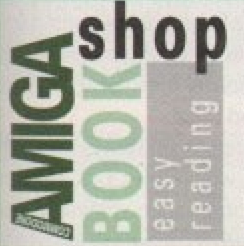
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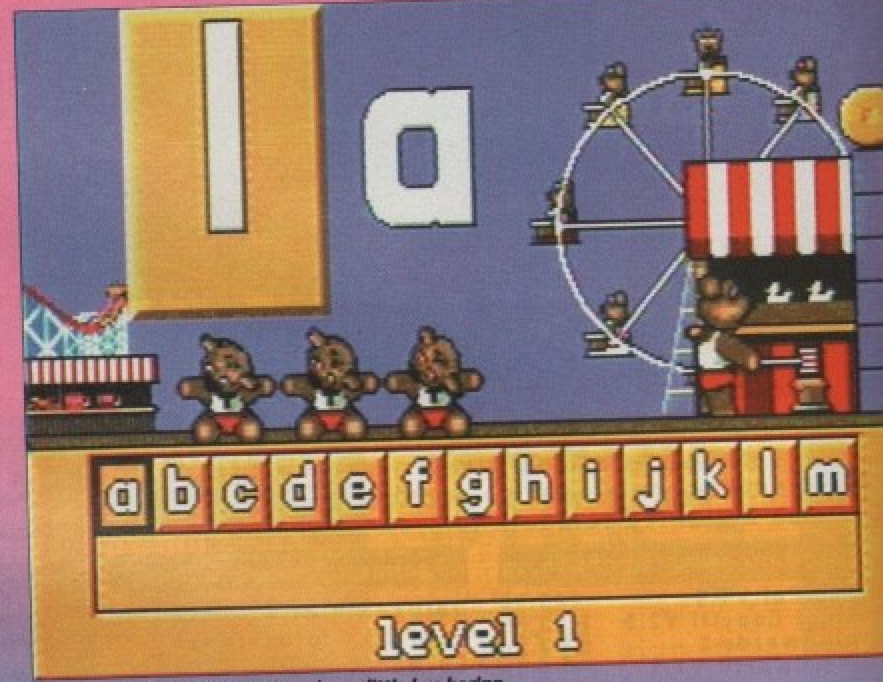
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Fractal universe can be very colourful



Fun School on CDTV makes learning a little less boring

CDTV software – is it any good?

Julius Alexander romp into the CDTV RON revolution to fin some good, som bad and som ugl

You can now buy a CD-ROM drive for your Amiga and use the growing range of CDTV software that is available. But why should you part with approaching £300 anyway? What can you do with it? Are the CDs now available worth handing over your hard earned dosh for?

To answer to these questions I locked myself in a room, plugged in my trusty Amiga with attached A570 and examined some of the growing range of CDTV titles.

A Bun for Barney • £29.99
BBC Multimedia

This is a great advert for CDTV. In its raw form – without any interaction – it is a fairly simple story for children lasting for around 15 minutes.

Even at this level, with its beautifully drawn pictures, Tom Baker narration and sweet story line, A Bun for Barney would keep many young children happy.

But the best it yet to come. As the pointer is moved around the screen, which any inquisitive child is bound to do, and over certain areas of the pictures, it changes into a magic wand.

Press the button at this point and the pictures spring into life with bunnies that jump out and dance, frogs that leap and trees that sway. A definite trendsetter and one which all prospective CDTV developers should take a look at!

Advanced Military Systems
£29.99 • Dominion

Most us, speaking from a masculine point of view, go through a period of being fascinated with guns, tanks and weapons. For anyone going through such a period this one's a must – masses of information on the most deadly and exciting (?) military hardware in the world.

Combining the world of computers and war, two popular pastimes of a lot of children, I would guess this is likely to be a small success!

All Dogs go to Heaven • £34.99
Merit Software

A pretty basic painting package which suffers from being to simple for its own good. Very simple in concept, you have a series of drawings which you then add your own colour to – the '90s version of painting by numbers?

Select the colour, move over an area and then pour the colour into that area. For small children it's probably quite good, but for everyone else it's just too limiting.

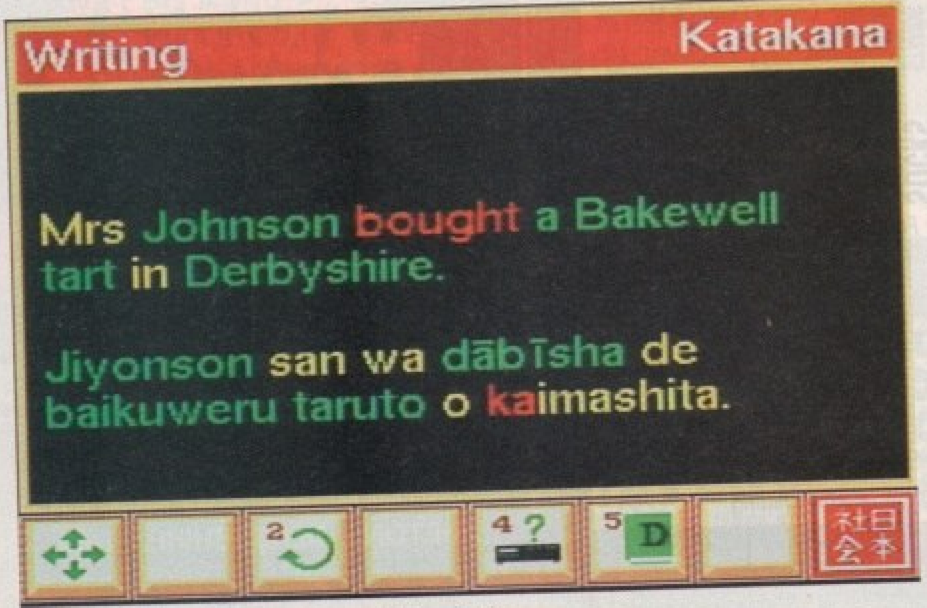
Even for children it has the limitation that there are only so many variations. If there'd been additional picture disks it would have had more potential.

Animals in Motion • £29.99
On-Line

A bit of an odd one this. Why anyone would want to spend just under £30 to look at a collection of black and white pictures of animals I don't know. However artist friend of mine has assured me that budding animators, illustrators and pain this collection is invaluable so I guess £30 it's good value.

Apparently the work of Eadwe Muybridge, which this CD is all about, trailblazing stuff when originally done still is for artists creating movement animators.

This CD shows his work as stills and mations and I have to admit that even



Japan World is designed to teach Japanese interactively

glimpsing this made me want to try drawing... If you've got artistic leanings, take a look.

Battle Chess • £39.99 • Interplay

A game of chess with a difference. Using a 3D view of the board, you watch as your pieces move around the board – under your instructions – and do battle.

Although it's another Amiga conversion and not a great one at that, it still has a lot of novelty value and plays a reasonable games of chess, something to waste away the winter evenings with.

Now if someone would only do a version where you actually played the game from a piece's-eye view, and charged around the board, I think they'd have a far greater hit on their hands. But for the time being Battle Chess is a good attempt at a first introduction to computer chess.

Battle Storm • £29.99 • Titus

A great Amiga game perfectly adapted to CDTV media. Not! It's a basic arcade game with multi-directional scrolling, lots of aggressive aliens trying to blow you to bits to which you must react in a like fashion.

No advantage of using this on the CDTV and pretty standard as arcade games go. Overall boring and disappointing.

Case of the Cautious Condor £34.99 • Tiger Media

A lot of people have raved about this particular title and admittedly it shows what can be done with masses of storage space.

It's a simple detective story where you must solve a murder by wondering around, listening to other people's conversations and picking up clues. The graphics – and there are loads of 'em – are fantastic, almost real cartoon quality and the sound is impressive.

Unfortunately I found the depth of gameplay lacking – the only way you are prevented from solving the case in the first go is by a time limit (given enough time you could solve it on your first go). Worth seeing but don't bank on it as a long term source of entertainment.

> *Let's face it, fractals can look pretty impressive sometimes...*

CD-Remix v2 • £29.99 Microdeal

The quickest way to describe this title is as a sequencer for CDs. You specify parts of a music CD which you can then remix, looping and repeating them at will.

There are a couple of niggles but nothing serious, ie changeovers are a little rough, but these aren't the fault of the CD software and without some awfully expensive studio equipment there are no easy answers.

These gripes aside, it's very simple and sweet CDTV application that will give owners hours of enjoyable fun.

Connoisseur Fine Art Collection £34.99 • Lascelles

Personally I've always wondered just who buys books with nothing but picture after picture in them. However someone must, and given that, this disk is quite reasonable.

It's basically a collection of digitised photos of paintings across time, with explanatory text. If you're into this kind of thing, open your wallet and take your flexible friend for a walk, you won't regret it.

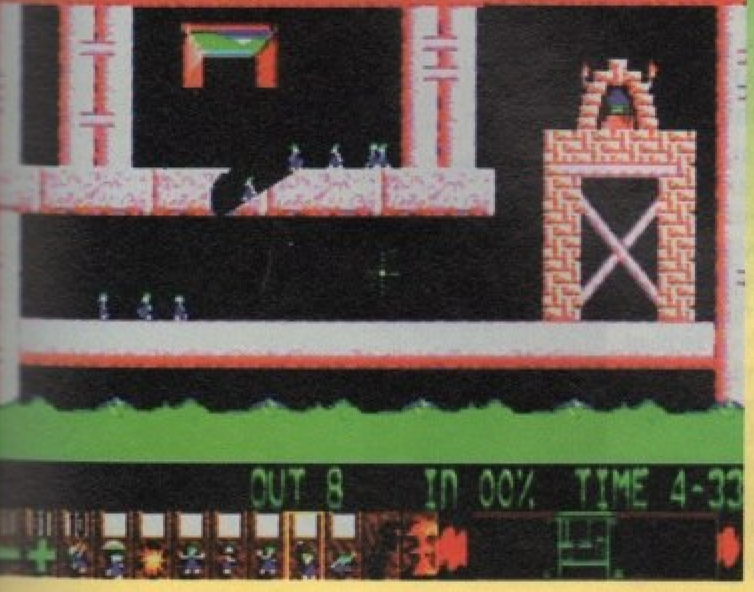
Dr Wellman • £54.99 Digita Multimedia

Where as most of the games reviewed here started off badly, Dr Wellman started well and kept up appearances. There are several different ways of getting to the information you want, and all well presented.

The software utilises the medium well with lots of informative text, most of which is backed up with pictorial support.

To further help and give you confidence in the product – important given the subject matter – there is a lot of narration, and the voice immediately helps being in a relaxed but confident manner. It contains a lot of information covering a many of the general medical topics you'd expect to come across in the home.

This is probably one of the few titles I looked at that I was sad to return – it almost made me want to cut my finger to find out how to apply the plaster!



Lemmings: What more can be said?

Falcon • £49.99 Spectrum Holobyte

For the armchair pilot who's doesn't have another computer, Falcon is a pretty good introduction to combat flight simulators. For A570-owning Amiga users, however, there are several better programs available for the Amiga.

Possibily Falcon's biggest problem is that given the amount of control you have through the remote controller, you have only a small amount of control over the plane.

This aside however, it's still a good game with lots of different missions, nice graphics, reasonable speed and OK graphics.

Fractal Universe • £29.95 Almathera

A lot of people are fascinated by fractals and if you're one of them then this is the CD for you! As well as the ability to generate fracticals (and let's face it, fractals can look pretty impressive sometimes – see the screenshot of the Fred Fish Collection) Fractal Universe also includes full background information and a lot of text on the subject of fractal art.

I can't help feeling however that £29 for this is a little over the top, but if you're into fractals then you should have it.

Fred Fish Collection • £19.95 Almathera

The Fred Fish Collection is a large assortment of programs, utilities and games. While for normal Amiga users their collation on to a single CD is to be welcomed (you don't want to know how many floppy disks it takes to store this collection normally) I'm doubtful of their use to the CDTV user.

This is because many of the utilities and programs were designed for use with a keyboard and as such CDTV owners will have to buy a keyboard to get the maximum benefit from it.

For A500 with an A570 however it's a great collection and a useful CD.

Fun School • £24.99 • Europress

On the Amiga the Fun School range of educational software has been well received by children. It's a fun and easy educational range that get children learning while they're having fun – which must be a good thing.

There's nothing exceptional in this Fun School series of several CD-ROMs each costing £24.99 that provide an educational age range from under five to over seven.

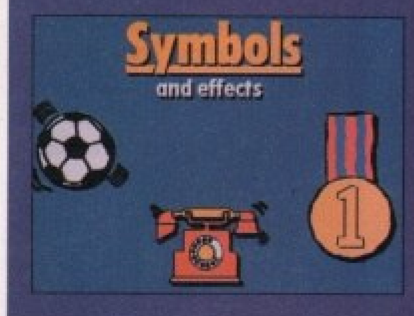


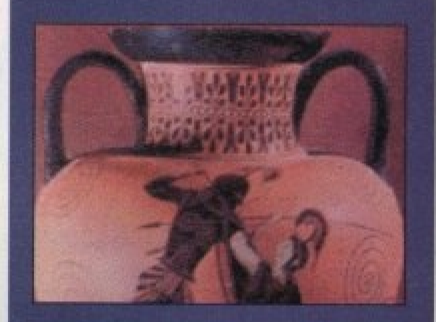


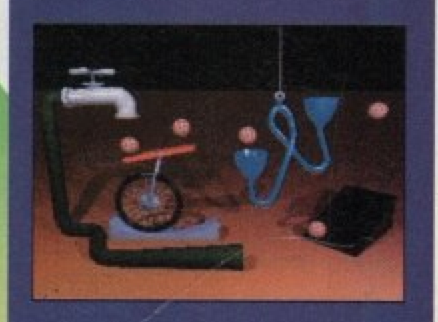
The Scala 500

The home video titling system

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- Professional Credit scrolling









The only question I have is that given that CDTV disks are supposed to be cheaper to produce and the capacity of one CD disk equals a lot of floppies – couldn't Europress have put more than one Fun School title on a CD-ROM and charged the same?

Still if you've got the money and children to educate (surely a contradiction in terms?) wander down to your dealer and take a look.

Garden Fax Series • £34.99 Intersearch

The Garden Fax Series are in fact four disks, each costing £34.99, but because they are all so similar – the only difference being the type of plant they cover – I'm looking at them as a whole.

Initially they are disappointing – gaudy colours and poor graphics they don't appear to offer much. But on further examination they provide an informative, detailed analysis of plants (along with photos), all of which is easily accessible.

Using a simple selection process which starts you at the top of a list of 200-odd plants, answering various questions you work your way through a series of conditions (light, colour, temperature etc) that your prospective plants must live in.

The program then presents you with a small list of plants to chose from, on which you can call up growing information and so on. Neat, simple and effective but could do with a little tidying up around the edges.

Global Chaos

If you're into the rave scene this is a definite must. Abstract patterns set to some pretty wild audio tracks and a simple game thrown in for free.

The result is likely to become a cult product and will undoutedly further the Amiga's street credibility, but unlikely to sell in great quantity.

Guinness CDTV Disk of Records £34.99 • Guinness

One of many encyclopedia-type CDs. It's of reasonable quality with digitised photos, pictures, speech, the odd animation and film clips. For those interested in records, this provides what must be the definitive reference guide and a really useful, yes really useful, product giving near-instant access to a vast amount of information.



Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective – simply the best CDTV game yet!

Hound of the Baskervilles £29.99 • On-Line

This is the CDTV title of the famous Sherlock Holmes case and I have no problem in recommending you stay with the book version.

I can only describe this CDTV title as, erm, poor, poor and poor. Very few pictures, no moving images that I saw, very little interactivity and generally lacking in quality.

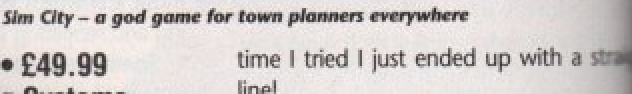
The only redeeming aspect is the quality of the vocals – these at least have been done by someone who knows how to narrate – clear and authoritative.

If you're looking for a detective story or Sherlock stories, take a look at Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective.

Illustrated Holy Bible • £29.99 Animated Pixels

A disappointing CDTV title this one. It's immediately obvious that little work went into this. There are blatant mistakes in the text where it has been mistyped and the Amiga-drawn pictures of scenes from the bible are lousy.

Add to this that there's very little true interaction and it's a disappointing CD allround. The only real point of this CD is that you can search for particular words and verses, but I'd seen this done about 12 months ago on a PD floppy disk-based version. That cost about £8... it's you choice.



Sim City – a god game for town planners everywhere

Japan World • £49.99 Global Learning Systems

Imagine a language tuition course where you could hear and see the language in question. You could also call up information on just about every aspect of life in the country of the language. You'd have a powerful aid.

Japan World is just such a package. Maybe it's because I've always been fascinated by Japan, or maybe it's because this is a good disc in its own right, but either way I was really impressed by Japan World.

If there were other language courses (say French, German, Spanish) of a similar quality to this, Commodore would have a strong advert for CDTV!

Lemmings • £34.99 • Psygnosis

What needs to be said that hasn't already been said about Lemmings? This is a pretty standard implementation of the classic Psygnosis game.

It's a little disappointing that with all the storage space available thousands of more levels weren't added and that the CDTV controller is not the best way to command your Lemmings, but it's still a great game. If CDTV is you're first computer you should take a look at this.

MyPaint • £29.99 SaddleBack Graphics

This had great potential. The CDTV as a home entertainment environment will obvious have a large number of young children using it. Every child I know loves to paint and draw and as such a CDTV painting package is agreat opportunity.

Sadly, MyPaint suffers from the CDTV's controller, which just isn't suitable for painting. Every time I tried I just ended up with a strai[ght] line!

Given a decent controller like a draw[ing] tablet or light pen this program would [be] great. Philips CD-I system has a childre[n's] controller that looks like it's out of a Fi[sher] Price factory and if such a product w[ere] available for CDTV I'd be only to happ[y to] recommend this.

NASA – The Heroic Age of Spac[e] £19.99 • Trokia

This title uses Commodore's claim[ed] answer to FMV, CDXL. Unlike FMV wh[ich] can display moving images occupying [the] complete screen, CDXL can only handl[e a] quarter of the screen.

The consequence on this particular [title] is a like watching a scrambled Sky Sate[llite]

CDTV and CD-ROM options

In addition to software there're also a number of periphe[rals] now starting to appear for CDTV which add to the enjoyme[nt] possible. The more notable ones is:

Trackball Controller • £79.99 • Commodore

Basically an alternative way of controlling the pointer o[n] screen. A large ball is mounted in a casing. Rolling the bal[l] the palm of your hand moves the pointer onscreen.

Tracker balls have been available for the Amiga for a wh[ile] but never really managed to rival the mouse for control. Th[is] one, although a good tracker ball, fails because CDTV so[ft]ware doesn't require the precise placement that tracker b[alls] offer. The Trackball Controller also has interfaces for t[wo] joysticks.

Video Genlock Card • £149.99 • Commodore

Allows you to take moving pictures from video camera, vid[eo] player and the like and mix them with the display that t[he] CDTV is producing, and then record this back out to a vid[eo] recorder. Ideal for video titling-type applications.

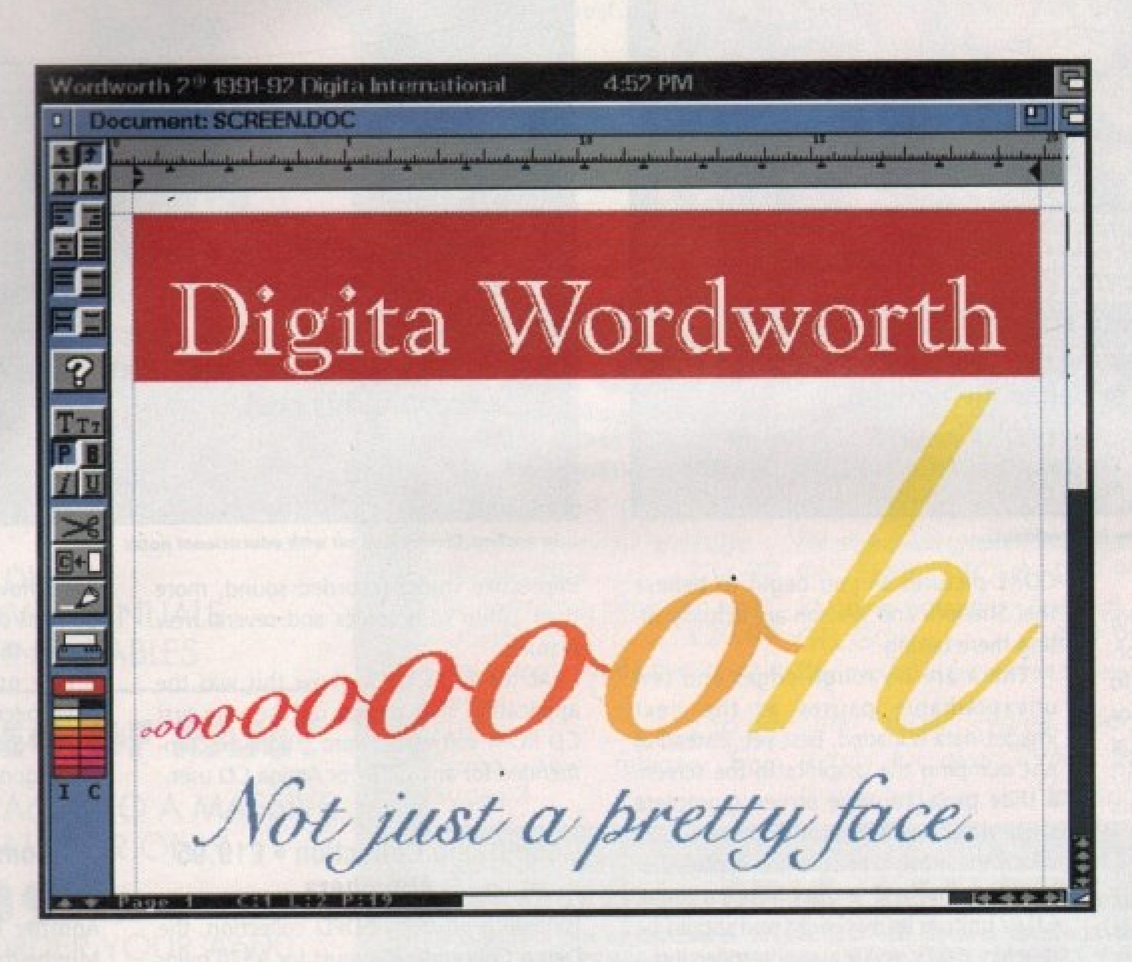
Voice Master • £39.99 • Microdeal

Simply this allows you to add your voice to CDTV titles th[at] support it. In language courses for instance you can pr[o]nounce the foreign language yourself to see how your versi[on] differs from the correct version. Limited by the number [of] CDTV titles that support it, but worth keeping an eye on.



Karaoke – it had to appear on CDTV sometime, I suppose

Actual screen. Not simulated.



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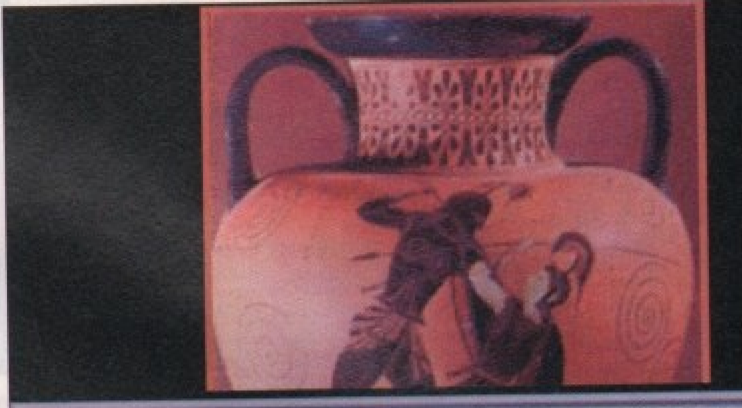
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Achilles was a famous Greek warrior during the Battle of Troy. His body was magically protected except for his heel.

more...

...to ancient Greece, and all with educational notes

channel. This is a shame because The Heroic Age' has real potential. The information is very interesting, the audio accompaniment is well done (you can for instance hear Neil Armstrong's immortal words as he first set foot on the moon!) and as a "multimedia" application its pretty good.

It's just a pity it's not FMV! Hopefully when Commodore sort FMV out, Trokia will come up with a follow up which will really show the CDTV off.

Psycho Killer • £29.99 • On-Line

Some has described this as the closest any CDTV title has yet come to an interactive movie. I wouldn't. It's long series of digitised photographs (of London) which you move through screen after screen.

The only action comes on certain screens where you must quickly move the pointer to a certain part of the screen and click the button. Get it wrong and you're history. Sadly lacking in excitement, graphics or enjoyment.

Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective • TBA Icon Simulations

There review is of a brand new title from America, and was responsible for holding up this article! Just as I was about to send the copy off, through the door popped this title. At first I ignored it, but on closer inspection it merited holding the whole review back for.

Sherlock Holmes Consulting Detective is a title which is on most American CD-ROM owners' "must buy" lists and for a good reason.

This is no easy way to describe this – OK, maybe there is, but don't want to spoil the enjoyment you'll get from this when you see it, except to say that it features professionally recorded sound, nice atmospheric pictures and masses of quality CDXL moving pictures.

The narration is perfectly timed to the CDXL pictures so you begin to believe that Sherlock and Watson are actually sitting there talking.

There are no rough edges and few unexplainable pauses as the next images/data is loaded. Best yet, instead of just dumping the graphics to the screen, a slide projector-type screen (complete with video-style buttons) pops up, in which the moving images are displayed.

This game will probably sell a lot of CDTV units in its own right and should be in every CDTV/A570 owner's collection – it's the best example yet of what CDTV is capable of. Buy it.

Sim City • £29.99 • Infogrames

A classic Amiga program adapted for CDTV. Unlike many other games converted to work on CDTV, this is far more than a straight adaption.

The concept of SimCity is to build a city, attract a population and then keep it going. Throughout this period various disasters befall you which you must also cater for.

SimCity is very absorbing and enjoyable and also has serious side to it to – all-in-all it's a great game. The CDTV incarnation builds upon the original with impressive studio recorded sound, more than 10Mb of graphics and several new features.

At the ECTS trade show this was the application that picked up the very first CD-ROM software award. Highly recommended for any CDTV or Amiga CD user.

The Demo Collection • £19.95 Almathera

Following on from CDPD collection, the Demo Collection is a must for A570 owners, but not recommended for the CDTV owner. It contains loads of pictures, animations, fonts, games and two versions of the Amiga's operating system (1.3 and 2.04).

If you're a serious or hobbyist Amiga owner you'll find this a valuable CD-ROM, although some of the stuff could do with more documentation.

Wrath of the Demon • £29.99 REAHYSFT

This title didn't even start well. Three megabytes of data it boasts, great, but a CD disks can hold 550Mb! Starting the game, things get a little better, with a very nice introduction sequence. Sadly it goes nowhere from here. The rem[...] control doesn't work with this typ[...] game, the game graphics are avera[...] pretty poor sound (given what co[...] have been achieved) and limited ga[...] play. Nothing really bad, but noth[...] really good either!

Women in Motion • £29.99 On-Line

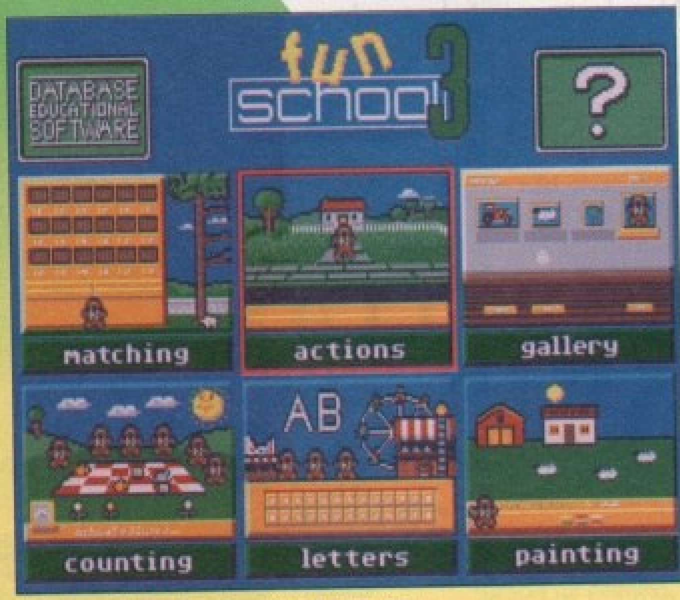
Another library of work from Eadw[...] Muybridge, this time a collection[...] rather unattractive naked women. [...] peculiar, but once again useful if yo[...] into animation and drawing, or slig[...] perverted...

Xenon 2 • £29.99 • Mirrorso[...]

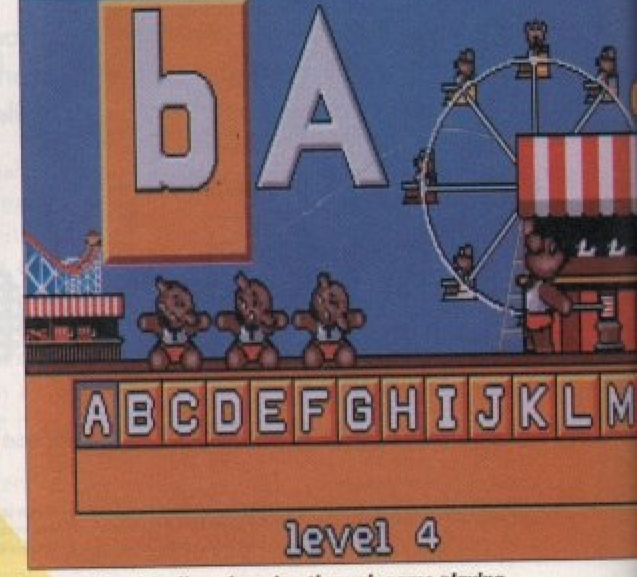
A well known Amiga game, Xenon 2 [...] must for any CDTV players sim[...] because it's a great game. But for Am[...] users owning an A570 it's now a little [...] of date compared to recent ga[...] released on floppy.

As a conversion little has been d[...] apart from a new soundtrack from B[...] the Bass added to accompany the ga[...]





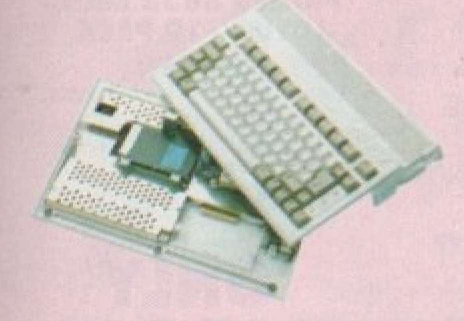
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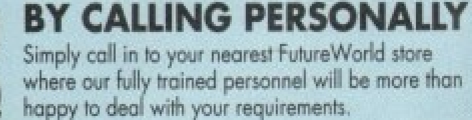
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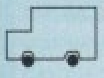
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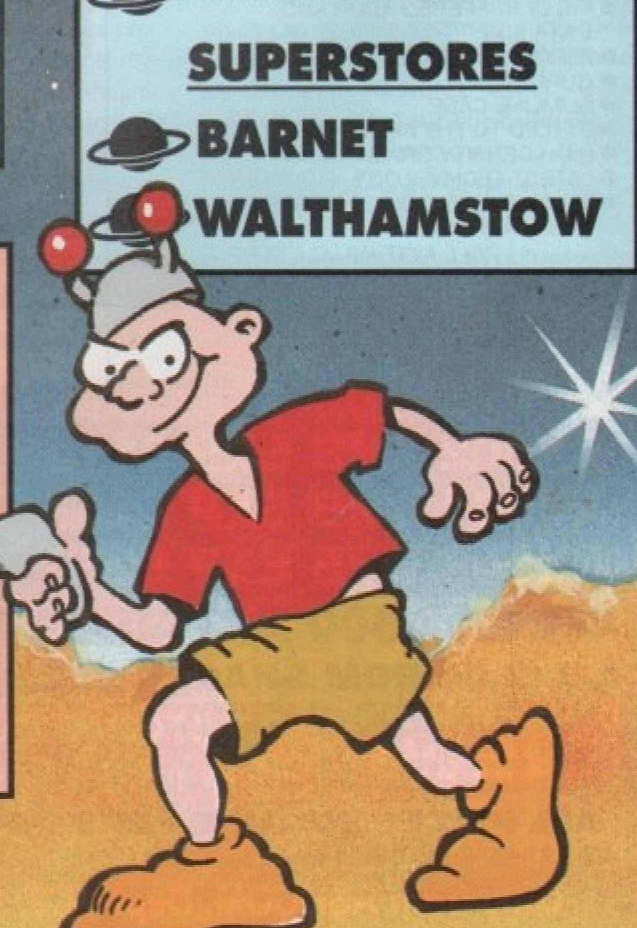
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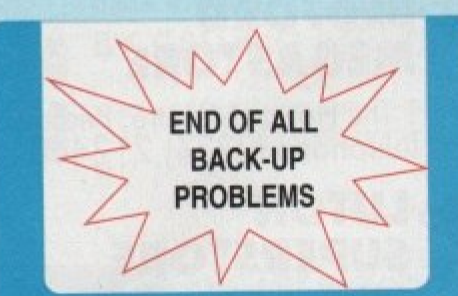




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First steps to productivity

You're wasting your machine's potential if all you're doing is zapping aliens. Gary Whitely looks at some more productive applications

Brilliant – you've just finished the last level of Zool and are contemplating suicide because there are no challenges left for your trigger finger. Outside a dark shape stalks the streets, coming ever closer until it reaches your door.

A resounding crash shakes you back to reality. Stumbling around in the dark you realise that it's only the postman – and a sly grin creeps across your face. As you snatch the package containing that desktop publishing software you ordered it seems that things aren't so black after all.

Yeah, I know, this isn't how real life happens. But if you believe the sales figures it would appear that many Amiga owners are locked into a little world of their own anyway – games, games, games and rarely a glimpse of even a Workbench screen!

Believe it or not, there can be more to computing than zapping baddies or collecting keys. OK, playing games may be a lot of fun, but have you ever considered what else you can use your Amiga for?

So put that joystick down and pay attention while we reveal another side of your favourite computer – productivity.

"Huh? And just why should productivity interest me?" you are probably asking. Well, if you're old enough to have friends, possessions, money, hobbies and a desire to communicate with the outside world you might just find that productivity could improve your life, or at least help to make it more manageable.

If you run one of Britain's increasing number of home-based businesses you'll have to keep accounts, turn out letters and reports and file information on customers and services – productivity can help here too.

However, productivity doesn't have to be just for the serious things in life. Maybe your school, youth group, sports club or company needs a newsletter and you want to produce it, as well as do some nice illustrations for it. Productivity can help here too, since it covers a multitude of sins.

Spreadsheets, databases, desktop publishing, wordprocessing, disk utilities, accounts and graphics packages are all productivity applications, and they can all help you do better things with your Amiga than endlessly playing games.

As you've seen, productivity software can be very wide-ranging. So to help you figure out what's what, here are a few introductions to the main animals in the productivity jungle.

Databases

Every time you make a list of information, such as the names, addresses and telephone numbers of your friends, you are producing a database.

In many cases this will take the form of a little notebook, card index, Filofax insert or, in more upmarket circumstances, as data stored in an electronic personal organiser.

A computerised database is also a list of information, set up and entered according to the requirements of the user and anything which can be listed can be set up as a database – library books, video cassettes, stamp catalogues, recipes – you name it, you can database it.

By first designing a screen template to take the data you wish to enter and then typing the data into a blank form for each separate record a whole database can be built up, and updated as necessary.

The data files can be selectively printed out, or specific data can be found by searching for keywords, such as all occurrences of the surname Jones, or all books about Amiga computers, for example.

Database design requires both discipline and an awareness of exactly how you may need to extract the data in the future, but like most things a little practice will go a long way.



One of the new generation of word publishers, Final Copy has many of the features associated with DTP programs

Graphics

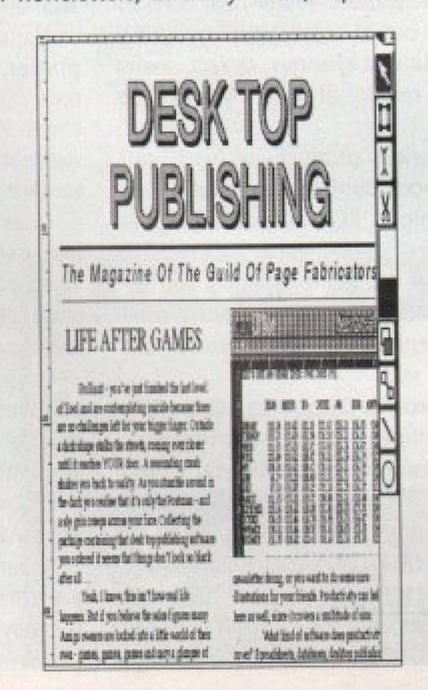
As well as producing business graphics, which are often catered for within spreadsheet software, it's nice to be able to produce your own illustrations for newsletters, birthday cards, reports and so on.

You may already have a graphics program, but if you don't I would highly recommend Deluxe Paint III or IV. Although Deluxe Paint IV is the latest version (4.1 actually), I still prefer Daint in many ways as I find it simpler to work with, though of course it doesn't handle HAM (Hold and Modify, 4096 colour) graphics, which probably isn't that important if you plan on printing in black and white anyway.

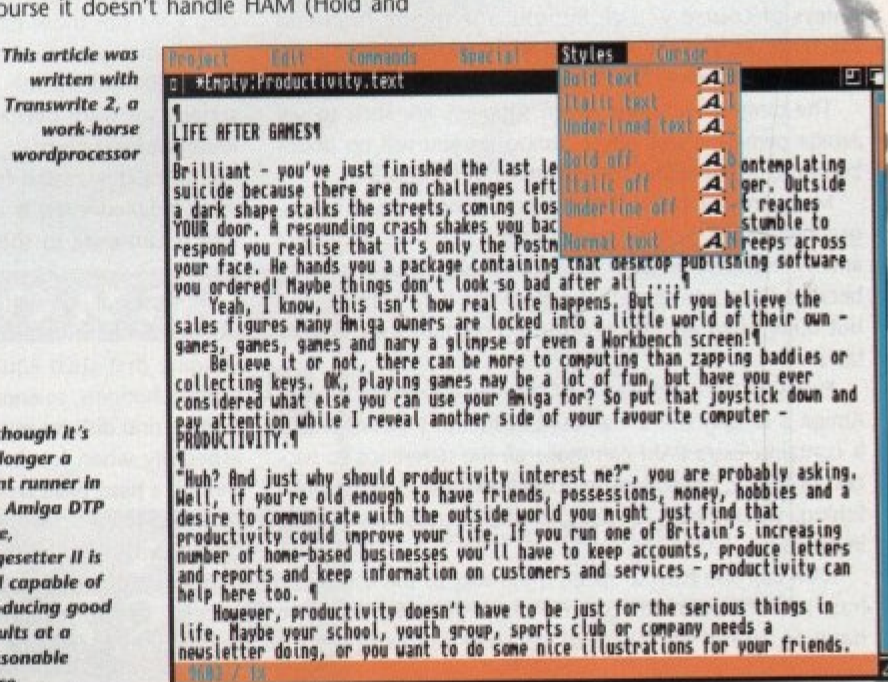
Graphics produced with Deluxe Paint (or any other which can output IFF format images) can be imported into DTP or word publishing packages which can utilise bitmapped pictures, though in some cases there are restrictions on the number of colours that the software will use.

Even if you can't draw for toffee there is always the possibility of scanning in a logo or picture by using a relatively inexpensive hand scanner, or even an expensive flatbed model. By running a hand scanner across an image it can be turned into a greyscale (or even colour with newer models) IFF file which can be used just like any other image.

Another way of grabbing pictures is to use a digitiser (such as Rombo's Vidi-Amiga 12) to capture images from a video camera or video deck with solid freeze frame.



Although it's no longer a front runner in the Amiga DTP race, Pagesetter II is still capable of producing good results at a reasonable price



This article was written with Transwrite 2, a work-horse wordprocessor

Wordprocessing

What's the difference between wordprocessing and desktop publishing (DTP)? No, this isn't a joke, it's something which can be quite confusing – especially as some software packages now seem to be blending features which were previously regarded as being exclusively in the domain of DTP software.

Wordprocessing, as the name suggests, ➤

is the processing of words. In essence this means typing text into your computer, editing it to your requirements, spell checking it, doing some basic layout and then printing out the results.

The inclusion of good spell checking software with a wordprocessor is very important, even if you consider yourself to be literate, as many silly mistakes often creep through when working at speed.

Most of these goofs can be filtered out quite easily with a spell checker, though you'll still need to proof read to catch those occasions where a correctly spelled-word is in the wrong place – eg "the" instead of "them".

This article was written on a wordprocessor (Gold Disk's Transwrite 2, in fact) but instead of being printed out it was delivered to *Amiga Computing* as a text file on a floppy disk.

By importing the text and laying it out with the pictures in a desktop publishing program the pages that you are now reading are constructed.

The major difference between DTP and wordprocessing software is that DTP can also incorporate true graphics elements – pictures, clip art, structured graphics and specialist typefaces, where wordprocessors only deal with text.

Inevitably this means that a DTP package requires much more memory to run successfully than a wordprocessing program, as it has to cope with so much more data – particularly when producing pages which contain large amounts of graphics.

But the distinctions between wordprocessors and DTP programs have become increasingly blurred by "word publishing" programs such as Pen Pal, Wordworth, KindWords 3 and Final Copy, which mix some of the features of DTP packages (such as graphic fonts and picture importing) with more traditional wordprocessing functions. Of course, this can only be an advantage to the user, as such software inevitably offers more bang for the buck.

Spreadsheets

Putting it very simply, spreadsheets are definable grids in which numbers can be placed and then manipulated mathematically to provide results.

By adding headings and column information and entering numerical data which relates to these headings it is possible to build up complex applications, double entry book-keeping, financial forecast sheets and the like.

I use a spreadsheet to keep track of my income and expenditure because the Inland Revenue, in particular, are keen that I tell them what my earnings for each financial year are.

On one side of the spreadsheet I enter my income, along with any necessary details, and on the other my expenditure – which I break down into categories such as travel, bank charges, computer purchases, National Insurance payments and so on.

Every month I input all the relevant data from my invoices, bank account and purchase receipts and then total everything up.

This way I can have an instant view of how the old bank balance stands, and where the money goes.

In the simple example shown I've taken a theoretical cafe and looked at some of their monthly grocery outgoings.

By dividing the year into months it's easier to see patterns of spending emer and by breaking the purchases down in specific items it's possible to see exac how much has been spent on each item.

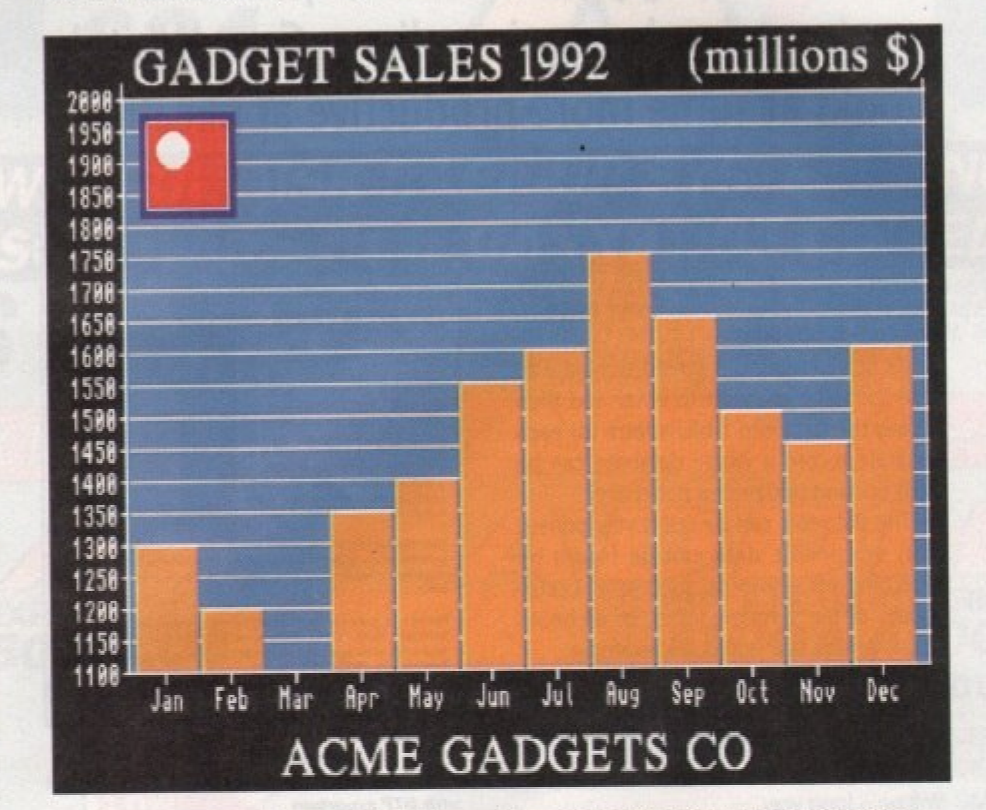
Each of the monthly costs is placed in "cell", for example cell D8 holds the co of tea for March. The total yearly expen ture on tea can be found by adding all th monthly spending on tea together b entering the formula SUM[D6:D17] in th TOTAL cell at D19.

When this formula is executed it ad up all the costs in column D from D6 D17 and shows the result in D19. If any the data is subsequently altered, the to will adjust automatically, saving a lot o recalculation.

By printing out the results you can ha a hard copy of precisely what has bee happening in the kitchen during the yea By designing different spreadsheets i possible to keep a check on all kinds o things – profit and loss accounts, footba league tables, stock control and so on.

Printing out endless lists of figures is the only way of seeing what's going on, a many of the better spreadsheets and in grated software packages allow graphs t be produced from selected sets of data.

Pie charts, bar charts, line graphs – th choice is yours in this voyage into th realms of big business.



The graph was produced as an IFF file by the graphics module of Mini Office and then cleaned up, recoloured and captioned with Deluxe Paint

Accounting

Instead of using a spreadsheet to lay o financial matters, a program such Digita's Home Accounts 2 takes an entir different approach. By defining a set transaction types such as CASH, HO SAL etc (for cash, hobbies, salary and on) and then setting up as many separ accounts as you need to reflect your fina cial affairs it is possible to keep track your financial transactions across a wh range of accounts and spending ca

Expansion – what is it and why do it?

You might think that once you've bought your Amiga that that's the end of it, and that you've got all the hardware you'll ever need. But don't be fooled for one minute, unless of course you've bought one of the high-end machines such as the A3000 or 4000 which include extra memory, hard drive, fast processors and all the rest.

The range of add-ons which suppliers are keen to sell Amiga owners seems never-ending, as you will no doubt be aware from reading the adverts in this magazine.

Mice, tracker balls, disk drives, memory, hard drives, graphics tablets, monitors, printers, scanners, digitisers and accelerators all crop up with monotonous regularity because these are items that people not only want to buy, but quite often actually need to accomplish their desired tasks.

Probably the most vital addition you can make to your Amiga is to upgrade the amount of memory (RAM) which it contains. Extra RAM can make all the difference to success or failure, particularly in applications like desktop publishing, where large amounts of data or graphics can be involved.

RAM can also help to speed things up, as the computer has more room to crunch data in and doesn't have to spend so much of its time rearranging its storage areas.

An extra 2Mb of RAM can do wonders for your machine's versatility, and upgrading to a megabyte of chip RAM (for those faithful to older Amigas) will help to ensure that you don't run out of screen display during those vital last minute document changes. In fact, many serious software packages require at least 1Mb of chip RAM just for starters.

The next essential for serious productivity work, and more relaxed eyes, is a good monitor – preferably one which connects to the Amiga's RGB output for higher quality.

Professional users often use multisync monitors and deinterlacing hardware to reduce the screen flicker, but I imagine that such equipment will be well beyond your modest budgets, so enough said.

A second disk drive will prove invaluable to many users, especially when lots of multiple disk access is required, though a hard drive will certainly be an option you should consider if you decide to get seriously involved with productivity.

Some programs, particularly DTP software, can require access to huge amounts of data, for instance Compugraphic fonts or clip art, and a hard drive will save a great amount of access time and disk swapping.

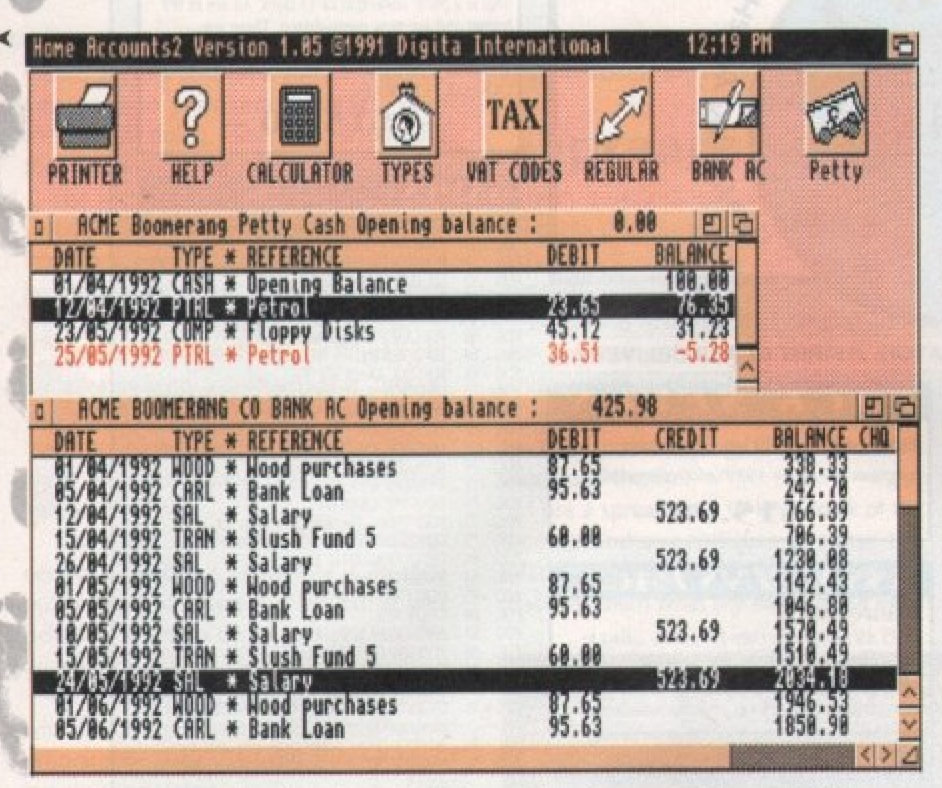
Buy the largest capacity drive that you can afford – they fill up much faster than you might expect – and go for a SCSI one if you can.

Naturally, if you need to get hard copy, you'll need a printer. Your choice will inevitably be based both on requirement – and cost. While there are truckloads of cheap 9-pin dot matrix printers knocking about they may well not provide the quality you are looking for, especially for DTP work.

Laser printers currently give some of the highest quality but can be pretty expensive to buy and to run. Twenty-four pin dot matrix printers offer good quality at reasonable cost, but are noisy, though they can do reasonable-cost colour work and graphics.

For my money, a good printer buy would be a modern inkjet model like the Canon BJ10ex or Star SJ48. These provide very good print quality with whisper-quiet printing. With some ingenuity and coloured ink refills they can also provide nice colour output if you are prepared to improvise a little.

A word of warning though – make sure that the printer you choose has a proper Amiga printer driver, otherwise you may well be buying a dead duck.



Accounting software such as Home Accounts 2 offers an alternative approach to spreadsheet book-keeping which many users may well prefer because of accessibility and user-friendliness

mini Office — Spreadsheet Module

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DECEMBER	£11.25	£18.62	£23.69	£40.63	£26.36	£35.25	£155.80
TOTAL	£143.82	£198.67	£222.82	£400.13	£276.47	£403.56	£1,645.47

This spreadsheet is from Mini Office, but you'll find that it is very similar to most others

gories.

As a newcomer to this approach I found it to be very accessible and easy to get to grips with – though remember all the categories will take a bit of practice.

Because the accounts can be interlinked, anything transferred from one to another can be tracked easily. Reports based on selected data or formats can be printed out for easy reading or inclusion in documents.

I reckon that's it's just a matter of choice. Spreadsheets are probably more flexible in the long run, but for day to day administrative work in small business, home accounting or cost tracking, an accounting package will do an admirable job in all but the toughest circumstances.

Disk utilities

If you have ever tried to use the CLI or SHELL interfaces provided with Workbench you'll know how frustrating it can be to do some very simple tasks, such as formatting a disk or moving a few files around.

Disk utilities are designed to free you from such drudgery and add more power to your elbow by providing a point and click environment where all of the usual disk operations (and often a great deal more) can be easily and quickly achieved.

Current favourites such as Directory Opus (which I find absolutely invaluable) or SID 2 are so flexible that they can also be used to launch other programs, display pictures, play sampled sounds, archive files and print out documents, in addition to all the disk manipulation, formatting, copying and other tasks that they perform.

Hard drive owners will find such software especially useful.

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As you've probably gathered by now, productivity can burn quite a hole in your pocket. But if you are in business you'll appreciate the time, effort (and cost) saved on doing manual book-keeping, typing letters, and producing printed materials, while the creativity involved in producing a newsletter can be very satis[fy]ing, as well as educational.

By all means continue playing game[s] as we all know that all work and [no] play makes Jack a dull boy (or so they sa[y]) – but once in a while consider doin[g] something a little more serious. You nev[er] know, you could even end up makin[g] money out of it.

● *Special thanks to Micro-PAC UK Ltd for the loan of the Mi[ni] Office and Home Accounts 2 software illustrated in this article.*

Directory Opus is a brilliant disk utility program

Recommended products

As a guide, here is a small selection of productivity software. Where possible costs are based on advertised, not recommended, prices.

Mini Office – Europress Software £40
Integrated spreadsheet, wordprocessor, database, business graphics and disk utilities package.

The Works Platinum – Micro Systems Software £40
Integrated spreadsheet, wordprocessor, database, business graphics and communications package.

Gold Disk Office 2 – HB Marketing £90(?)
Integrated wordprocessor, DTP program, spreadsheet, database and business graphics package.

Pagesetter 2 – Gold Disk £40
The same program as bundled in Gold Disk Office 2. Reasonably featured budget DTP program.

Wordworth – Digita International £80
Word publisher with many DTP functions.

Final Copy 2 – Softwood Inc £67
Word publisher with many DTP functions.

Transwrite 2 – Gold Disk £30
Low priced but fast, well-featured wordprocessor ideal for almost all word-crunching tasks.

Home Accounts 2 – Digita £38

Directory Opus – INOVAtronics £30
Mega disk utility with lots of power.

Deluxe Paint 4.1 – Electronic Arts £60

Power Scanner v2 – Power Computing £99
Hand scanner to produce mono IFF files. Plus, of course, the offerings from many PD libraries.

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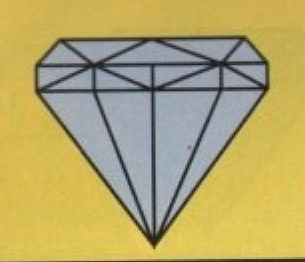


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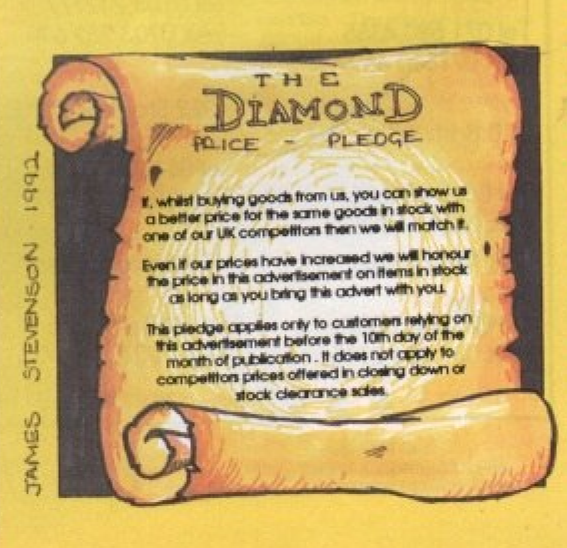
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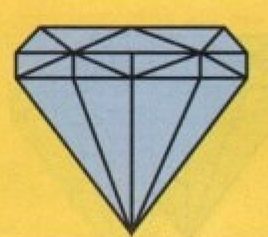




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Sound advice



Getting into sound sampling on the Amiga nowadays just couldn't be easier. There's a good range of hardware and software with prices that start from virtually free – ie the public domain software offerings – to units which have the price-tags and specifications which attract professional users.

In short, there is something on the Amiga for everyone! Despite its popularity however there are still plenty of users who have yet to jump on, and enjoy, the sound sample bandwagon.

Whether you are a newcomer or not doesn't matter this month though, because there should be something in this sampling supertest to help or interest everyone.

Topics first and foremost on the agenda? How about we start with an explanation of what "sound sampling" actually is.

Complex

Musical notes are made up of sound waves that have a certain frequency (pitch) and a certain loudness (amplitude). When you listen to a piece of music, or any other sounds come to that, you are listening to a complex mass of sound waves which include many different frequencies and amplitudes.

If at any point in time you could take a snapshot of the sound you were hearing and measure the amplitude of that part of the soundwave then, using some agreed convention, you could express the loudness as a number.

If you did the same thing over and over again, a whole series of numbers could be obtained and, at the end of the day, you would have a list of numbers that represented the original sound.

It is these ideas which form the basis of sound sampling. By using special hardware which measures that amplitude information many thousands of times a second it is possible to build up a very detailed numerical, ie digital, copy of the original sound.

For what should now be obvious reasons the hardware units which provide this magic conversion are called "digitisers". Once the digitising process has been carried out the sound will have been turned into a stream of numbers.

This then allows a computer to be used to perform sophisticated editing effects – a user can take a piece of one sound, mix it with another, speed up or slow down the rate at which the sample is played, or even produce phasing and flanging effects by shifting the time-position of a sample before adding it back to itself.

These are things which are either difficult or impossible to do using conventional analogue recording techniques.

The quality of any digital sound depends on the accuracy of the original digitisation process and here there are two different variables to consider – the sampling rate, and the resolution of the numbers used to define the amplitude.

It should be pretty obvious that faster sampling rates will give better waveform detail, and equally obvious that increasing the range of numbers used to represent the amplitude measurements should also lead to better waveform detail.

Because on the Amiga the final sou[nd] will in most cases be played using the in[ter]nal sound chips, amplitude digitisation w[ith] most Amiga digitisers is performed to [an] accuracy of eight bits (allowing for 2[56] possible "loudness" values).

One term you will hear over and o[ver] again in the world of Amiga samplin[g is] "8SVX", which is one of the IFF stand[ard]ised file formats used for sampled sound[s]. [Its] claim to fame, as many of you w[ill] already know, is that allows one Amiga p[ro]gram to load and [save] samples created w[ith] any other Amiga m[...] program.

As far as ba[sic] equipment goes, [all] you really need to [get] into the world of sa[m]pling is some digiti[ser] hardware and the so[ft]ware to control i[t] many of the Ami[...]

Top quality sampling with Audio Engineer Plus

Eight-bit Amiga digitisers start at around £20...

sampling packages include both!

Eight-bit Amiga digitisers start at about £20 with the top of the range units costing about ten times that amount. Hard disks and lots of RAM obviously help any application but they are not absolutely essential and the 1Mb Amiga user without a hard drive can still do an awful lot of sound processing.

To be honest it is possible to get into the world of sound sampling even before getting a digitiser unit. There are literally thousands of good sound samples readily available and providing you have the software to utilise those sounds you can mix, alter, and use those samples to your hearts content.

Most people however, once bitten by the sampled-sounds bug, do go out and get the necessary hardware/software so that they can actually sample their own sounds.

Although Midi doesn't come into the picture when you are creating and editing sound samples, you will find that having access to a Midi keyboard will be a big help as far as composing music is concerned.

Many tracker programs and sequencers which allow sampled sounds to be used to create songs also allow the musical note data to be entered using a synthesiser keyboard rather than the Amiga keyboard.

This makes life much easier and if you are going to use sampled sounds in this way a cheap Midi keyboard will be a good investment!

Almost all sound sample digitiser units attach to the Amiga's parallel port. Basically you plug one end into the sound source – which might be a tape unit, CD, microphone, or some other audio signal output – and the other end into the parallel port.

The lower-priced units will probably have no controls at all. Higher priced units include both line-level and microphone-level inputs, signal gain controls, switchable parallel-through port connections (so that the digitiser can be left permanently plugged in) and perhaps a number of other goodies.

Having switched on and booted up the sampling editing software the rest is comparatively easy. Set an appropriate sample rate, adjust the volume of the input signal to a suitable level, and then just hit record. Your sample will be sitting in the editor waiting to be saved or edited.

OK, so some details do vary from package to package, but the above scenario should give you the basic idea of how easy the sampling process is. Be warned that initially, your results may not be very good. It takes time and practice to learn how to get the recording parameters to their optimum values.

Practice does however make perfect and after a few attempts the whole process becomes second nature.

Some terms explained

Clipping A waveform distortion caused by a signal being too strong for the input circuitry of a recording or sampling device.

The circuitry gets overloaded and the top parts of the incoming waveforms get distorted or chopped off. The end result is always the same – a poor quality sound.

IFF 8SVX This is the IFF (Interchange File Format) name of a file arrangement used for storing sound samples.

RAM scanning This means exactly what it says – programs which provide RAM scanning facilities allow you to scan through the Amiga's memory and, by "playing" the data, look for sound samples.

Raw sample Basically a copy of the byte values of a sound sample waveform just as they appear in memory (as opposed to a sample stored in a specially designed file structure such as IFF 8SVX).

The world of sound sampling is available to you for just a few pounds. Paul Overaa asks what sampling is, and looks at the hardware and software available today

Tracker

In the early Amiga days, programmers needed a fast, convenient way of creating music for games and demos and one of the earliest utilities to appear was called SoundTracker.

Within a couple of years a number of these programs had appeared and they became generally known in the trade as trackers.

Being essentially programmers' tools, these trackers adopted programmer-like conventions for specifying music sequences. Song descriptions were built around lists showing the times and the pitches at which various samples should be played, and so on.

While not ideal from a musician's viewpoint, this method of composing music rapidly became established, but the race was then on to create programs that were more user-friendly.

One of the most successful trackers was a program called MED (short for Music EDitor) which allowed songs to be created by linking together small blocks of music.

These blocks could be arranged and repeated in any way so, once the blocks had been defined, building the song became very easy indeed.

During the following years a number of new MED versions were ➤

Audio Master's strength is its excellent software

released providing new editing facilities, a standalone song player utility called MEDPlayer, and support for Midi instruments.

Up to this point these programs were – and the original programs still are – public domain, but when MED's successor, OctaMED, arrived a decision was made to go commercial.

An enhanced version, called OctaMED Pro, has now been released and, as you'll see from our product/price listings, it is by no means expensive.

OctaMED Pro is more powerful and much easier to use than the original MED program and is highly recommended for those of you who need a tracker.

Samplers

Lots of magazine and PD disks include sound samples that can be extracted and used for your own purposes.

Finding them is easy enough if you only have a few directories on the disk – especially if the samples have been given obvious names such as crash.iff, bang.snd or wallop.8SVX.

Locating them when the samples have less intuitive names (eg PDX_80) can be much harder, especially if the disk is packed with many directories.

More to the point – it may take a lot of time to look at every file in every directory! The result of course is that all too often you can miss potentially useful sound samples just because they were not easy to identify.

Fortunately there's a nice easy solution – we automate the whole process and let the Amiga do all the hard work...

Search is a small CLI/Shell utility that does just that. It looks not only for 8SVX sound samples but all common IFF files (ILBM pictures, SMUS files etc).

It will even find things like Music X MSCX, CanDo DECK, standard Midi files (SMF Files), and the new AIFF (Audio IFF) files that are going to be used by the new 16-bit sampling products due to appear!

To use it, just open a CLI/Shell window and type Search followed by the disk drive to be looked at. SearchDF0:, for example, will search all of the directories of the disk in drive df0 and give you a list of the required files and their directory locations. This is the sort of output you'll get.

```
Amiga Computing IFF/SMF Search Utility (Paul
Overaa 1992)...

IFF ILBM:  df0:img1001
IFF ILBM:  df0:pd_stuff/pic3
IFF 8SVX:  df0:songs/mydata.snd
IFF 8SVX:  df0:songs/click
SMF File:  df0:songs/latest_test/if.mid
```

If you are searching a hard disk or a floppy with many files and nested directories then the program may take a minute or two to locate the required information, but it will be a lot quicker than other methods.

You can, incidentally, cancel the search operation at any time by hitting Ctrl-C or Ctrl-D. If you need a permanent copy of the program output, just redirect the output to a disk file, or to the PRT device. For instance, the command:

```
SEARCH >RAM:contents DF1:
```

will send details of the df1: analysis to a RAM disk file called "contents".

Public domain freebies

Don't forget also that there are literally hundreds of disks containing sound samples floating around in the public domain. The only trouble is that it is usually a hit and miss affair as far as quality is concerned.

There are some really excellent samples floating around, but you usually have to wade through a lot of rather more average sounds to find them.

Having said that, it doesn't take that long to build up a reasonable collection of good sounds. Public domain libraries like PD Direct, who offer a lot of music disks, will be able to point you in the right direction.

Sampling hardware and editing software

AMAS 2 • Microdeal • £100

This is an upgraded version of the very popular AMAS sampling package which includes stereo digitising hardware that can sample at rates of up to 90kHz.

This sort of sampling speed can't be realised with the current Amiga range but the AMAS 2 software doing the driving can achieve mono recording sampling rates of up to 55.9kHz and stereo recording rates of 27.9kHz (replay frequencies are up to 55.9kHz).

Software adjustable input level controls are provided and as well as the usual cut/copy/paste type editing controls there are a whole range of effects that can be produced (echo, phasing, chorus, reversal and so on) and it is possible to overlay samples, swap and copy channels, fade in and out, and do things like stereo bouncing.

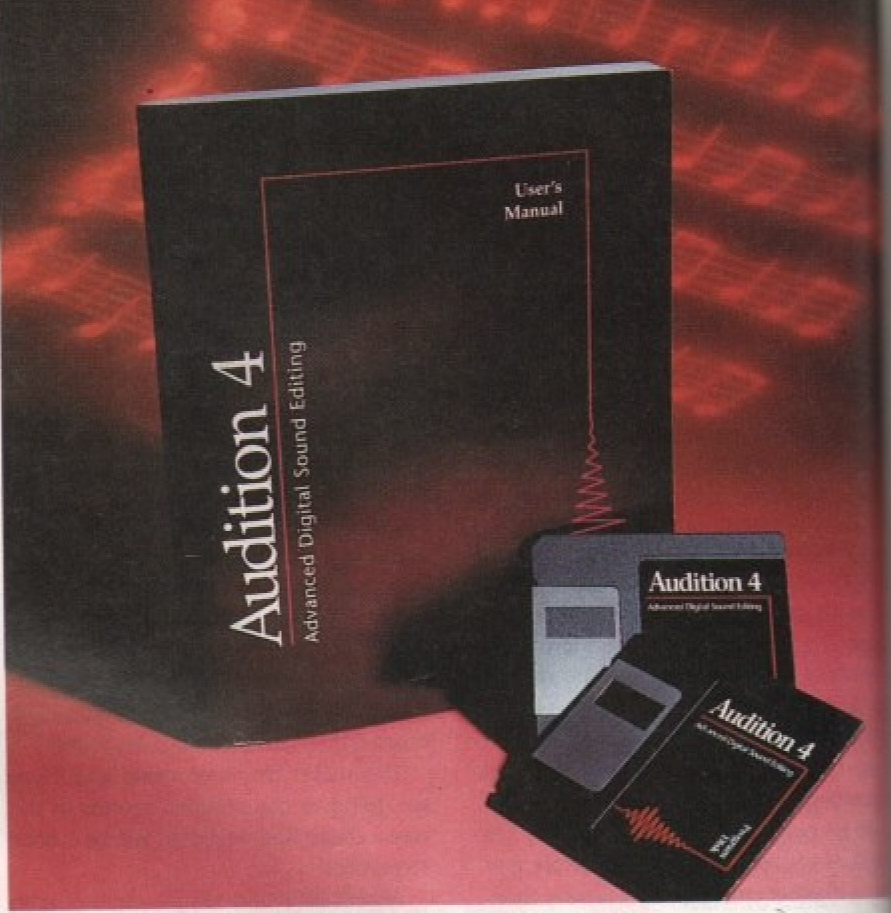
Sampled sounds can be saved in IFF and raw formats, and in a new "executable" form that allows samples to be played outside of AMAS 2 simply by clicking on an associated icon.

The software also includes things like a 3D FFT (Fast Fourier Transform) display and a dual real-time spectrum analyser.

A small, but reasonably useful, sample-orientated, Midi sequencer is also provided and you even get a microphone thrown in as well.

AMAS 2 offers new users a very attractive total package and it's probably to this, plus the fact that it is a well supported product, that the package owes its popularity.

When you compare raw AMAS 2 results



Audition 4 is a very capable and well supported package

with those of less expensive packages, such as TechnoSound Turbo and Beat Studio, you'll often find surprisingly little difference (or no difference) in sample quality.

AMAS 2 software however is reasonably powerful and, as an integrated sampling and editing package it must be said that because of this AMAS 2 does, at a price, win hands down over the cheaper alternatives.

Audio Engineer Plus HB Marketing • £204

This Ramscan/GSOFT offering is, quite simply, the best 8-bit Amiga sampler available at the current time. Unfortunately it is also the most expensive.

The stereo digitising unit is a GSOFT Audio Imager and this includes two separate, and very fast, A/D (analogue to digital) converters. The hardware is in fact rated in excess of 300k samples per second and so is capable of sampling at rates well beyond that obtainable with Amigas fitted with 68020/68030 accelerator cards.

Audio Engineer boasts solid construction, switchable microphone and line inputs, signal level adjustment, printer switch-through connections (so that the digitiser can be left permanently plugged in) and above all a quality by which all other Amiga samplers are judged!

Audio Engineer II, the associated sample recording/editing software, is also extremely good – as well as offering all the usual types of edit effects, the software also includes time-stretching and time-compression, frequency cut and boosting via software filters, very powerful loop creation

Sampled sounds

IFF Sound Sample Library • Walkabout Music
One disk: £2.50, ten disks: £19.95 all disks: £49.95

There are a lot of sample libraries around but this one is absolutely brilliant and covers everything from the usual types of drums, bass, synth and piano sounds to obscure things like African and Indian instrument collections.

Each disk contains samples from a particular sound category and in fact the full library list goes something like this... African, Indian instrument, Indian percussion, Arabic, Far East, European, Oceania, Americas, FX percussion, Drum Kit, Analogue Percussion, Latin percussion, guitars, bass guitars, analogue bass, digital bass, brass, synth brass, pianos, strings, synth strings, choirs, organs, bells, and sound FX.

The number of samples on each disk ranges from about 20 to over 100 and there's no doubt at all that Walkabout Music have done an excellent job (helped no doubt by the fact that they are all musicians and know the difference between a good sample and a bad one).

If you want to get an idea of the quality of the library just get hold of the bass guitar samples disk (it's actually disk 14 in their catalogue) – all too often bass guitar samples are mediocre but this stuff is so good it'll blow your socks off!

Sample Series • Gajits • £9.95

A range of high-quality IFF samples for use with music programs. Percussion & Effects, Guitars & Strings, Brass & Woodwind, Synth & Vocals and Piano & Keyboard volumes are currently available.

facilities, and special methods for providing playback of stereo samples at rates of up to 56k samples per second.

When used with machines such as a standard Amiga A500 or A2000, quite a bit of Audio Engineer Plus's high-standard hardware specification is inevitably wasted, but there's no doubt that this package is nevertheless the business. For the serious user it is worth every penny of the asking price.

AudioMaster IV HB Marketing • £70

This is basically the Aegis release of RamScan's Audio Engineer Plus software and needless to say it's not only brilliant but is generally regarded as the best Amiga 8-bit sampling software around at the present time.

Audition 4 • HB Marketing • £50

This piece of stereo/mono sound sample editing software comes from SunRize, a company that know an awful lot about Amiga sampling.

Although the configuration menu has specific options for selecting Perfect Sound samplers (another SunRize product) a generic option allows the program to work with any other parallel-port based 8-bit Amiga sampler.

Audition 4 is an excellent piece of software with a great many useful features, including being able to preview and adjust effects in real-time before making permanent edits, and direct recording to disk or RAM.

Although it has been overshadowed in a number of respects by AudioMaster IV it is still a very capable, and well supported, program.

Beat Studio • Pandaal Marketing £40 approx

This fairly new offering from City Beat comes complete with all the hardware and software necessary to get into the world of Amiga sampling.

The manual is lousy but what has surprised an awful lot of people is the fact that, with a little care, the hardware can produce extremely good results.

The editing software is adequate but it cannot compete with offerings like AudioMaster IV or Audition 4.

Crystal Sound • BlitSoft • £94

This 8-bit sound digitising unit has only just started to arrive in the UK and there's no doubt that it is very good indeed. It provides twin, ultra fast, low noise A/D converters which can sample at up to 70kHz in stereo.

It has microphone and line level inputs (with active audio filters on all inputs), separate left and right gain controls and a printer pass-through.

Crystal sound is directly compatible with Audio Engineer Plus and Audition 4 if sampling in Perfect Sound mode.

Datel Stereo Sampler Datel • £50

This sampling hardware and software package does its job but it is not particularly impressive considering the competition.

Digital Sound Studio Silica Systems • £50

This is a good, easy to use, hardware and software 8-bit sampling system and one that has earned much praise from existing users.

Good documentation is provided and the program includes things like software-controlled input levels and microphone/line switches which makes it easy to adjust input signal strengths.

Another plus for this offering is that a four-track sample sequencer is included in the software. The digitiser itself is well made and, all in all, this package is good value for money.

MegaMix Master • Rombo Productions • £40

This is another budget-priced sampling hardware and software package that jo the ranks of Beat Studio, TechnoSound P etc.

The hardware does what it is suppo to well enough but that's about all that c be said. On the whole TechnoSound Plu a much better proposition, and it is som what cheaper!

Micro Sampler • Datel • £25

This is a budget-priced mono sampl hardware unit which comes with so software. The hardware seems to do a r sonable job!

Perfect Sound 3 • HB Marketing • £60

This is another combined hardware a software stereo/mono sampling syste which is able to produce excellent results comes from SunRize and the software p vides most of the common editing facili including fades, sample mixing, reversal, tering, resampling etc., required for serio work.

Pro Sound Designer Gold Power Computing • £39

A reasonably priced hardware/softwa sampling system which, as far as value money goes, competes well with other si ilarly priced offerings.

Sound Master HB Marketing • £130

This Aegis offering is one of the bett hardware/software stereo/mono sampli systems available and perhaps most imp tant of all it now comes with the brilli Audiomaster IV software.

The hardware includes a volume le control, overload indicator, line and mic phone inputs.

Miscellaneous hardware and software

Audio Sculpture • Software Management Group • £49

This program by Expose Software is a relatively new tracker utility which compares favourably with OctaMED Professional in all but one respect – it costs over twice as much!

Music Pack 5 • PD Direct • £12

This pack contains a whole host of public domain programs, songs and samples including MED v3.2 and Pro Tracker.

OctaMED Professional Amiganuts • £22.50

Despite the fact that it has a few rough edges, this is one of the best tracker programs around at the present time and is excellent value for money. OctaMED users can upgrade for just £12.50! OctaMED Pro contains a whole range of different screens but two areas in the display are always visible. Firstly there is a status bar which provides current edit modes, block/instruments numbers or names, and mute/play track status.

Secondly there is a 15-button menu panel. Ten of the menu panel buttons cause other control panels to be displayed and these control the loading and saving of songs and instruments, the setting of relative track volumes, transposition, Midi settings and a variety of block/track editing facilities.

The remaining five menu panel buttons switch between the five main OctaMED Pro editors.

There's a Block editor which is used for entering note data in conventional MED tracker format, a Graphic note editor which allows you to enter and display/print music a bar at a time using conventional notation, a Sample editor, a Synthetic Sound editor and a Sample List editor.

Compositions can incidentally be saved in a variety of different formats: Song files, files with song and instruments/samples, and modules containing multiple songs in a single file.

Arrangements can also be saved in a Sound/Noise/ProTracker-compatible form. Another point that is worth mentioning is that the OctaMED Player program is ARexx controllable so it is possible to load and play songs under ARexx script control!

Sound Enhancer Plus Omega Projects • £34.95

This unit sits between the audio outputs of your Amiga and an external amplifier and can improve the audio quality of Amiga's internal sound chip output considerably.



Perfect Sound is another quality SunRize product

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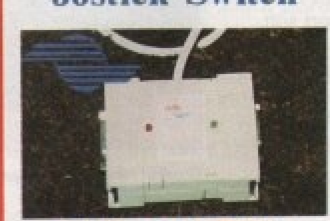
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Sound Trap 3
Omega Projects • £130

This is a popular budget mono digitiser whose hardware includes a parallel port pass-through connector (so you don't have to unplug it to use your printer).

Sound Trap comes with its own software but most serious users prefer to use it with packages like AudioMaster.

Stereo Master • Microdeal • £40

This is a budget-priced stereo/mono sampling package which includes both hardware and software. Signal input, incidentally, is via a 3.5mm stereo jack socket rather than the separate phono connectors used by most sampling hardware.

Stereo Master offers the same basic types of facilities, quality, and ease-of-use as products such as TechnoSound Turbo.

Stereo Sampler 2 • Trilogic • £38

Just the digitising hardware but can be supplied with a variety of different sample editing software. With Audition 4 for example the package costs £69.99 and this is quite a powerful, and cost-effective, combination.

At the higher end of the market

For non-professional users, Amiga samplers have caught on in a big way, but there is no doubt that the 8-bit amplitude limitation has severely limited professional and semi-professional interest in Amiga sampling.

As a comparison, CD sampling uses a sampling rate of 44.1kHz and 16-bit amplitude resolution.

It is only comparatively recently that higher amplitude resolution digitiser units have been announced for the Amiga but already there are three units to choose from.

AD1012 SunRize Board
HB Marketing • £470

The AD1012 audio card fits inside the A2000/A3000 Amiga series and adds 12-bit digitising and SMPTE facilities to the system.

It comes complete with SunRize's Studio 16 recording and editing software and this can record and playback directly from disk.

You need a hard disk system with a fast drive to get the best out of this digitiser and if you are thinking of intensive use with an A2000 machine you are likely to find you'll need a 68030 accelerator card as well!

Clarity 16 • Microdeal • £150

This is the first low-cost hardware and software stereo 16-bit sampler to be produced for the Amiga and it's due out any time.

If it lives up to the press releases it is going to be a winner because not only will it offer a 16-bit system that can sample at up to CD rates (44.1kHz) but the software can convert between 8-bit and 16-bit formats so you'll still have IFF 8SVX support as well as 16-bit file format support.

Samples will be able to be played both through the stereo 16-bit cartridge output and through the Amiga's standard output channels.

The hardware includes an integral Midi interface and the software will provide a sample sequencer and options for using the Amiga as a sample-based Midi sound expander.

AD516 SunRize Board
HB Marketing • Price: TBA

This is a 16-bit hardware sampling board with software and a specification that is going to attract professional audio-visual users. It seems as though it is a rename for a board originally announced – some six months ago or so – as the SunRize AD1016. The AD516 hasn't arrived in the UK yet but there is little doubt that when it does it is going to have a price tag much higher than the AD1012 board – prices of around £800 have been suggested!



Studio 16 takes Amiga sampling to the limits

Conclusion

All the 8-bit digitisers tested behaved extremely well when presented with suitable signals. With the more expensive packages you get things like input level control, Midi connections, printer through ports and so on, but whether these things are important, and worth the extra cost, depends very much on your particular needs. If for instance you are a musician/hi-fi freak who already has a mixing desk then you will not particularly need a digitiser with input level control.

If on the other hand you want to sample voices using a microphone or some other non-adjustable audio output but have no external way of altering signal levels, then you will need a digitiser whose input levels can be adjusted.

It's quite clear that quality-wise the Audio Engineer Plus comes out on top but as far as digitising hardware is concerned the new Crystal Sound unit has also made a very good impression. On the software front it is AudioMaster III, which is essentially the Audio Engineer software, that steals the show.

There are now a lot of fairly cheap hardware/software entry-level digitising packages around but TechnoSound Turbo is quite a reasonable choice for the first time buyer.

Sampling tips and tricks

The key to good sampling is to get a good input signal to start with. Where possible this means sampling directly from source rather than using a microphone.

The object of the exercise is to avoid clipping but still ensure that a strong, clear signal is provided to the digitiser. The cheaper samplers will not have signal controls on them so it's necessary to adjust the volume of the actual source being used.

Some people find that a small hi-fi quality mixer can provide so much control over signal gain/equalisation that coupled with good quality leads even the lower-priced samplers produce results that come near to the top of the range samplers.

Remember also that for song creation it is not always necessary to create single note sound samples. Suppose for instance that you want to create a drum part consisting of bass drum, snare, open and closed hi-hats – with perhaps a couple of tom-tom drums thrown in.

One approach is to program a Midi drum machine to play the drum part and then sample one bar of it. Nowadays most drum machines use high quality sampled drum sounds and sampling a pattern being played by a drum machine is a good way to get a good quality drum track laid down with the minimum of effort. This approach has a number of benefits especially when tracker programs are being used – the drum track becomes ridiculously simple because only one single note and one voice (the sampled drum track) per bar is needed to reproduce the drum pattern no matter how complex the original part was.

You do of course have to take care with timing issues so that the drum part properly synchronises to the tracks which will contain the other song data but as always practice makes perfect and once you've got a suitable drum part you can of course re-use it to your hearts content.

Another space/effort saver is to sample chords instead of notes because again this allows a chord backing track to be created by entering just single notes.

Don't forget that your samples and music will sound much better if you use external speakers rather than those present in your Amiga monitor.

There are plenty of reasonably priced amplifier and speaker systems available and if it is physically convenient you can even use your hi-fi system.

Sound enhancers, units that boost particular audio frequencies, are also available and these can sometimes dramatically improve the quality of the Amiga's audio output.

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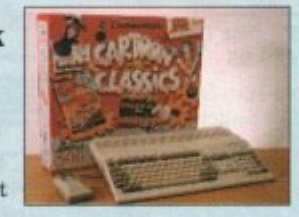
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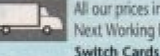
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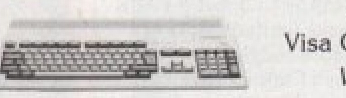
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Push Over + Grand Prix + Putty + DPaint III+ Space Ace + Kickoff 2
Pipemania + Populous + Carry Case + T-Shirt
Mouse + TV Lead + Workbench + Manuals

Amiga 600 Pack 2
Wild, Weird & Wicked Pack £349
Push Over + Grand Prix + Putty + DPaint II I+ Zool + Striker + Pinball
Dreams+ Transwrite Word Processor with Spell Checker
Mouse + TV Lead + Workbench + Manuals

Amiga 600 Pack 3
Epic Pack with 20Mb Hard Drive £479
Epic + Rome + Myth + Trivial Pursuits + Amiga Text + DPaint III+ Space Ace
Kickoff 2 + Pipemania + Populous + Carry Case + T-Shirt
Mouse + TV Lead + Workbench + Manuals

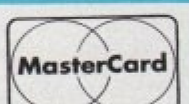
Amiga 600 Pack 4
Epic Pack with 20Mb Hard Drive £489
Epic + Rome + Myth + Trivial Pursuits + Amiga Text + DPaint III + Zool +
Striker + Pinball Dreams + Transwrite Word Processor with Spell Checker +
Mouse TV Lead + Workbench + Manuals

(All A600 Prices include Home Maintenance)

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Make the most of your Amiga with BSB Bruce Smith Books

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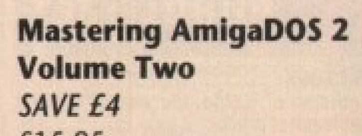
And we can help you there. These six super books, written to expand your knowledge of all aspects of the Amiga, are now on offer at knock-down prices.

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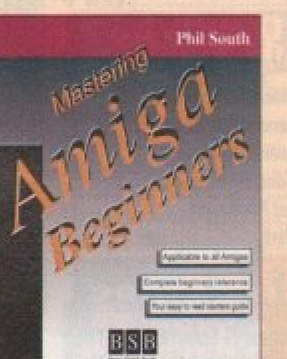
*These are the only two books compatible with the A1200

Mastering AmigaDOS 2 Volume One
WITH FREE DISK
SAVE £4
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If you want to learn AmigaDOS (upto and including version 2.x) then this is it!

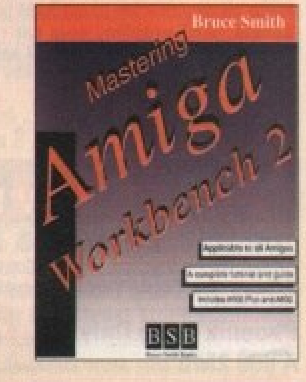
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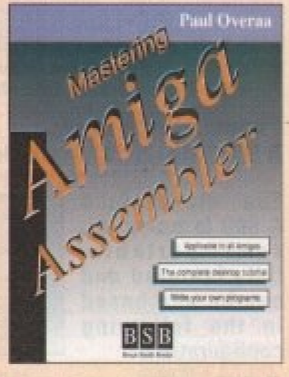
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SAVE £4
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Takes the raw beginner in hand and provides a solid grounding in Amiga techniques



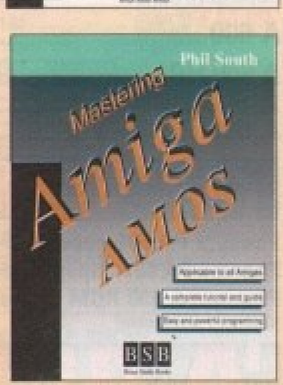
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A 1200 — AMIGA 1200 — NEW

Probably the home computer of the decade, the A1200 is the latest addition to the Amiga family. Incorporating a new internal engine and many more exciting and powerful features, this machine truly takes the Amiga family into the next generation!!!!!!!!!

FEATURES INCLUDE:

68020 Processor Running at 14 Mhz • 2Mb Chip RAM (expandable to 10 Mb using 4Mb fast memory PC MCIA cards and 4 Mb 32-bit RAM in CPU slot) • New double "AA" graphics chip set • 256 colours on screen from a 16.8 million colour palette • Full Amiga Key board (with Alpha numeric key pad) • CPU local BUS slot, (card edge).

Phoenix Price Only £379.99

A 600 — NEW PACKS

'THE WILD, THE WEIRD & THE WICKED'

1 Mb A 600 as standard and includes the excellent value Software titles: Deluxe Paint III • Formula One Grand Prix • Putty • Pushover

Phoenix Price Only......... £339.99!

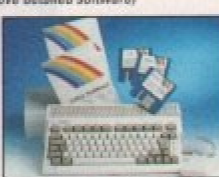
A 600 2Mb *(incl. above software)*.........£379.99

'EPIC•LANGUAGE PACK'

1 Mb A 600 as standard and includes **20MB HARD DRIVE** the excellent value Software titles: Deluxe Paint III • Trivial Pursuit • Epic • Myth • Rome

Phoenix Price Only......... £484.99!

A 600 2Mb+20 Mb Hard Drive ....£524.99 *(both include the above detailed software)*



The stand-alone A 600 is compact, semi portable, fully featured and can be purchased in the following configurations:

A 600 .... £274.99
A 600 HD ..... NOW ONLY £429.99
A 600 2Mb £314.99
A 600 HD 2Mb £469.99

A 600 — RAM EXPANSION

Phoenix PA 601-populated-1Mb.......£44.99
Phoenix PA 601-unpopulated-0Mb...£24.99
Phoenix A 600 ROM Sharer..........£29.99
Keyboard switchable!

A 4000 — AMIGA 4000

Features Include: 68040 32 Bit Processor running at 25 MHz (upgradable) • New Double AA chipset with 16.8 million colours • high density 1.44 Mb floppy • 120 Nb IDE hard drive • New Workbench 3

AMIGA 4000.................... £2,229.00

A 4000 with 40/240/425 Mb Hard Drive........£POA

1500 — AMIGA 1500

2.04 Workbench Includes: Deluxe Paint 3, Platinum Works, Home Accounts, Toki, Puzznic, x Elf, Amiga Format Book and Joystick

AMIGA 1500................ ONLY £539.99

A 500 — EMULATORS

GVP PC-286 16MHz........................£239.99
KCS Powerboard (with DOS 4.01)........£199.99
KCS Powerboard £184.99
KCS adaptor for 1500/2000... ONLY £59.99
Vortex A Tonce Plus 286 (16MHz)...£214.99

32 BIT — ACCELERATORS — NEW

The incredible speed of 32-Bit technology at a price you can afford only from S.S.L. Ray tracing an image that takes 24-hrs on a standard Amiga takes just **1 hr. 36 mins.** with an A5000!! FREE maths co-pro included with both A/B5000 accelerator cards.

A5000 + 1MB 16.67 Mhz £249.99
A5000 + 2MB 16.67 Mhz £289.99
A5000 + 3MB 16.67 Mhz £319.99
A5000 + 4MB 16.67 Mhz £349.99
B5000 + 1MB 25.00 Mhz £499.99
B5000 + 2MB 25.00 Mhz £669.99
B5000 + 3MB 25.00 Mhz £829.99
B5000 + 4MB 25.00 Mhz £979.99

A 500 — HARD DRIVES

GVP IMPACT SERIES II Hard Drives, the fastest Hard Drive/Controller for the Amiga. Features Game Switch, external SCSI port, FAAASTROM SCSI Driver, GVP's custom VLSI chip and internal RAM expansion up to 8 meg! Units use high specification fast-access QUANTUM Hard Drives coming with **2 yr. guarantee.**

A500-HD8+ 42 Mb .... NEW! £289.99
A500-HD8+ 80 Mb .... NEW! £379.99
A500-HD8+ 120 Mb £424.99
A500-HD8+ 240 Mb £689.99

DRIVES — ROCTEC

SALE OF THE CENTURY!!

Phoenix in association with Roctec and Conner, continue to achieve massive sales on this high specification, quality product. Due to the buying power of Phoenix we are able to maintain these incredible prices-prices that have left the competition GREEN with envy-and the Amiga buying public licking their lips. **Stocks will only last until the end of November.**

ROCTEC 40 MB........................ £259.99
ROCTEC 85 MB........................ £299.99
ROCTEC 120 MB........................ £364.99

Featuring Connor drives-very fast access times-(19ms or better) • expand up to 8 Mb using 1 Mb Simms only • 1 year guarantee • slimline design ideally colour matched to the A500 • Own power supply.

ROCTEC (controller Only)..................£164.99
Same specification as the above but without the hard drive fitted so you can fit your own. Please specify IDE or SCSI.

EXTRA MEMORY-Only £25.99 per Mb.

HARD DRIVES 1500/2000

Series II Hard Disk Controller/RAM card...£114.99
Series II 42 Mb Hard Disk and RAM card...£269.99
Series II 80 Mb Hard Disk and RAM card...£339.99
Series II 120 Mb Hard Disk and RAM card...£399.99
Series II 240 Mb Hard Disk and RAM card...£639.99

EXTRA MEMORY-Only £25.99 per Mb.

A 500 — ACCELERATORS

GVP Combination Accelerators & Hard Drives-The ultimate expansion product for the Amiga 500!

A530 Combi 40MHz + 52Mb Hard Drive........£659.99
A530 Combi 40MHz + 120Mb Hard Drive......£757.99
A530 Combi 40MHz + 240Mb Hard Drive......£979.99
A530 68882 Co-Processor.........................£204.99

FAST — ACCELERATORS 1500/2000

GVP G-Force 030-25MHz + 1Mb..............£545.99
GVP G-Force 030-40MHz + 4Mb..............£784.99
GVP G-Force 030-50MHz + 4Mb..............£1099.99

FAST — ACCELERATOR RAM Modules

1Mb Simm-32 Bit 60 Nanoseconds.......£65.99
4Mb Simm-32 Bit 60 Nanoseconds.......£182.99

PC — EMULATORS 1500/2000-3000/3000T

Vortex 'GOLDEN GATE' NEW! £419.99
This emulator is the ultimate bridge between PC/AT platforms and the Amiga. If you think this is for you, cross to page three for specification details in this months 'Trail Blazers' section!

IMAGE — PRINTERS

STAR

LC-100 Colour.................... NEW! £159.99
9 PIN colour printer with paper parking, eight fonts and electronic DIP switches.

LC24-100 .... NEW! £189.99
24 PIN with compressed data mode, 16 K buffer and 10 letter quality fonts,(with Star printer driver only).

LC-20.......................................£129.99
LC-200 Colour..............................£195.99
LC24-20.....................................£199.99
LC24-200 Mono £219.99
LC24-200 Colour..........................£268.99
XB24-200 Colour..........................£379.99
SJ48 Bubblejet .... NOW ONLY £219.99
Star printers come with one year warranty.

CITIZEN

Swift 240 Colour.................. NEW! £279.99
Swift 240 Mono.................... NEW! £259.99
Swift 200 Colour.................. NEW! £219.99
Swift 200 Mono.................... NEW! £199.99
Swift 9 Colour........ SPECIAL OFFER £179.99
Citizen printers come with 2 year warranty.

HEWLETT PACKARD

Deskjet-550C *(colour printer)*.... NEW! £559.99
300 dpi laser quality output • sharp blacks and 16 million colours available • six built in type faces-4 scalable • improved media handling • several paper sizes • **FOUR TIMES FASTER** than previous H.P. Deskjet range.

Deskjet 500.............. SPECIAL OFFER £329.99
Deskjet-500 Colour..........................£449.99
HP printers come with 3 year warranty.
HP black ink cartridge £24.99
HP colour ink cartridge £29.99

AUTO SHEET FEEDERS

STAR LC20.............................. NOW ONLY £57.99
STAR LC200...£59.99
STAR LC24-200......................................£62.99
STAR LC24-20..£62.99
STAR SJ48...£49.99

JET — BUBBLE JET

CANON BJ 10eX.................... NEW! £224.99
Upgraded version of BJ10e, the worlds biggest selling portable inkjet printer.

CANON BJ 20........................ NEW! £319.99
More Features than the BJ10, includes Auto sheet feeder. Top selling-Highly Recommended

CANON BJ 300...................... NEW! £374.99
80 column bubblejet provides laser quality output.

CANON BJ 330...................... NEW! £499.99
136 column bubblejet.

CANON Bubblejet cartridges............£17.99

PHOENIX PRINTER PACK
Supplied with ALL printers containing 1.8m std. printer cable, printer ribbons/cartridge and 250 sheets of paper absolutely FREE.

PRINTER ACCESSORIES

We have a large range of **high quality** printer accessories for all the printers we sell including: **dust covers from £2.99 • Ink cartridges from £13.99 • Mono ribbons from £3.50 • Colour ribbons from £7.99 • Printer stands from £7.99**

SILICON CHIPS

AMIGA CUSTOM CHIPS

Kickstart 2.04 ROM..£34.99
Kickstart 1.3 ROM....£27.99 Fatter Agnus 8372A..£34.99
NEW Super Denise.£29.99 CIA 8520A..................£9.99

MEMORY CHIPS

4 Mb x 9 (-70) Simm....£99.99 1 Mb x 4 (-80) Zip.....*£34.99
1 Mb x 9 (-80) Simm...£27.99 256k x 4 (-80) Zip.....*£29.99
256k x 9 (-80) Simm...£12.99 1 Mb x 1 DRAM..........£3.49
256k x 4 DRAM...........£3.49 *This price is for 1 Mb of RAM

These chips cover practically every popular memory expansion or Hard Drive system on the market for the Amiga ie. GVP, SUPRA, MICROBOTICS, COMMODORE

"I must write to congratulate you on the efficiency of your mail order staff."
Robert S. Blair ~ Denmark

X-PA — MEMORY EXPANSION

SUPRA 500RX the ultimate in Fast Ram expansion units. *(*Uses 256x4 Zips)*

8 Mb pop to 1 Mb*..............................£99.99
8 Mb pop to 2 Mb*..............................£124.99
8 Mb pop to 2 Mb.................................£149.99
8 Mb pop to 4 Mb.................................£209.99
8 Mb pop to 8 Mb £309.99

VISION — MONITORS

PHILIPS 8833Mk II........ ONLY £194.9
Colour Stereo Monitor now including 'Lotus Tur Challenge', and 1 years on-site warranty.

COMMODORE 1085 SDI £216.9
COMMODORE 1084 SDI..........£199.9

All monitors are supplied with a FREE cable for connection to your Amiga.

MONITOR ACCESSORIES-

14" Dust covers..£4.9
14" Tilt & Swivel stand...............................£13.9
Anti-Glare filter screen...............................£19.9
A4 Copy Holder...£12.9

"This is is the second time I have dea with you and each time have had excellent service and rapid delivery"
Peter W. Beaumont~ Huddersfield

MEDIA — DISKS

Don't confuse these quality disks with othe currently available. 3.5" 100% certified error free 7 clip. All disks include FREE high quality Phoenix lab

10....................£4.99 200....................£72.
25....................£12.99 500....................£174.
50....................£22.99 750....................£259.
100..................£39.99 1000..................£339.

TDK Branded disks- High performanc media from the experts-box 10 with labels.

10....................£5.99 100....................£52.9
50....................£26.99 500....................£249.9

1000 Phoenix Disk Labels................................£9.9

WIRE — LEADS & CABLES

Midi-Midi 2m....£3.99 Modulator ext....£9.9
Midi-Midi 3m....£4.99 Amiga-Scart.....£9.9
Midi-Midi 5m....£5.99 Amiga-8833MkII.£9.9
Disk Drive ext....£9.99 Joystick long ext..£4.9

Mouse/Joystick ext.......................................£4.9
Mouse/Joystick splitter..................................£4.9
*Serial/Modem cables......................................£9.9
*Amiga-Multisync...................................from£9.9
*Amiga-Microvitec..£9.9
*Amiga-CPC monitor.......................................£9.9
*Amiga-RGB/TV...£9.9
*SCSI Cable various £9.9

Printer 1.8m........£5.99 Printer 2.0m HQ...£7.9

***For full details of these cables or information regarding the right cable fo the job call 0532-311684. Custom built lead are no problem Phoenix.**

A500+ — PHOENIX 2 Meg RAM Upgrade Modules



A PHOENIX RA module can expan your chip RAM up t 2 Mb by using th trapdoor expansio port. Extra RAM necessary to unleash th incredible graphics cap bilities of your Amiga. All our boards carry a full 2 year quibble replacement guarantee. **It's never bee cheaper to upgrade!**

1 Mb Fully populated RAM board.... NOW ONLY £34.9
1 Mb unpopulated RAM board.........£16.9

VIDEO — MULTI-MEDIA

Rombo's Vidi Amiga 12 is the replacement for th complete colour solution bringing you the worl first mass market colour digitiser for under £100.

VIDI-AMIGA 12 .... ONLY £79.9
Outstanding features and plenty of **VFM!**-*(Va for money!)*-Highly Recommended.

ROCGEN Plus £129.9
Quality features and performance-Recommende

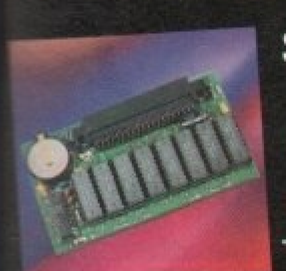
ROCKEY BY ROCTEC
The new chroma key unit - used in conjunction w a Genlock - allows you to superimpose live vid over graphics or video-substitute the brightne portion of a video source with a keyed imag Embed live video in graphics!

Phoenix Price.......................... £269.9

RAIL BLAZERS-WHAT'S NEW IN NOVEMBER 1992!

this month's pre-christmas "TRAIL BLAZERS," we focus on some of e best products and peripherals currently on release for the Amiga.

PHOENIX 1Mb A600 UPGRADE



Simply the Best !

£44.99

ROCTEC ROCLITE

This famous super slim drive has now been upgraded to include Anti-click and virus checker - We have reluctantly had to raise the price of this product due to the variance of the dollar rate. However to soften the blow we will include a FREE disk head cleaner worth £3.99

Phoenix price.........£64.99

FINAL COPY-UK VERSION

This powerful, unique WYSIWYG word processing package is the best value choice for your Amiga, sharing many of the features of full-blown DTP packages

Phoenix price.........£69.99

Be safe in the knowledge that you are buying the official UK version of the product from Phoenix. *BEWARE of dealers offering "Latest version" of Final Copy. This may be American product and should not be sold in the UK!*

VORTEX 'GOLDEN GATE'

Designed for the Amiga 1500/2000/3000 and 3000T this is a 25MHz 80386SX PC/AT Emulator. PC/AT slot support-Max 16 Mb PC/RAM, 4Mb for Amiga-Will use PC/AT IDE Hard Disk and floppy disk drives 2.88 Mb under Amiga DOS, highly recommended.

Phoenix price.........£419.99

AMOS PROFESSIONAL

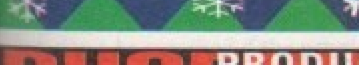
The most eagerly awaited software package of the year, has just received an award of 97% in CU AMIGA. Francois Lionet's superb creation has now evolved to include numerous new features developed from Amiga users ideas and feedback. Don't miss this six disk Bonanza!

Phoenix price £44.99

OPAL VISION

Amazing new 24-Bit graphics card and video system for the Amiga 1500, 2000 and 3000. Includes software suite worth hundreds of pound. With an incredible performance, this is simply awesome.

Phoenix price.......£739.99



PHOENIX PRODUCTS

MOUSE/JOYSTICK SWITCH.................£13.99
Don't damage your Amiga's ports! This device saves wear and tear makes switchover ***FAST,*** and does **NOT** require power unlike many others.

COMPUTER/VIDEO SCART SWITCH....£19.99
Flip between Video/computer signals at the push of a button.

Phoenix Stereo speakers..... NEW! £29.99
Superb sound and excellent dynamics. These two-way stereo Hi-Fi speakers are an Amiga standard- **Excellent companions on any gaming soiree!**

DISK DRIVES 3.5"

All drives feature super slim design, enable-disable switch, thru port and come with a **1 year replacement guarantee!**

Phoenix Deluxe Drive.....................£47.99
Roctec Roclite..................... NEW! £64.99
This famous drive has now been upgraded to include Anticlick and Virus Checker
Disk head cleaner..........................£3.99

FREE FAST UK DELIVERY

NEXT-DAY COURIER ONLY £4.50

MUSIC! AMIGA MUSIC

Attention all you music lovers! Phoenix have kept this unbeatable music deal running for you throughout the Christmas period.

MUSIC-X Jnr....only £15.00
When purchasing either a Phoenix Stereo Sampler or Pro Midi 2 Interface
Please Note: this is a limited offer only while stocks last!

STEREO SAMPLER......... NOW ONLY £29.99
Combines ease of use with state of the art analogue to digital conversion technology.(inc. **FREE** sample editing software +audio lead)

PRO-MIDI 2 INTERFACE.........................£24.99
This fully featured professional quality midi interface is very flexible giving semi-patch bay facilities. It has five ports in, out, thru and two switchable out/thru. (inc. **FREE** midi lead)

GVP DIGITAL SOUND STUDIO............£54.99
High quality sound sampler for all Amiga Computers
Amiga Music Made Easy-Only from Phoenix!

A 570 CD ROM CD-ROM

This essential add-on has finally arrived, suitable for A500/A500+, A570.

Phoenix price... ONLY £329.99

MICE & TRACKBALLS MICE

NAKSHA Upgrade Mouse.............£24.99
(With Operation Stealth, mat & holder)
Roctec Mouse...............................£13.99

GOLDEN IMAGE
Mega Mouse.......................................£12.99
(Has just received 90% Amiga Format Gold Award)
Optical Mouse..................................£29.99
High precision, pointing device.
Crystal Trackball..............................£37.99
Infrared-Cordless-Mouse... NEW! £47.99
(Rechargeable top selling innovation.)
Optical Pen Mouse.............. NEW! £39.99
High Quality 8mm mouse Mats.........£3.99

IMAGE SCANNERS

Powerful image processing tools for the office or the home environment.

POWER-Features include: 100-400 dpi • 64-Greyscales Thruport to printer • **FREE** Editing software.
Power Scanner v2.0..............£94.99
Power Scanner Colour............£234.99

GOLDEN IMAGE-Hand Scanner Series
Features: 400 dpi • 256-Greyscale • Touch up and Merge it software.
AlfaScan.......................................£124.99
AlfaScan Plus £149.99
AlfaScan OCR *(inc OCR Software)*.....**£279.99**

EPSON GT-6000 FLAT BED FULL COLOUR SCANNER-Plug into Amiga parallel port, 600 d.p.i. resolution, up to 16 million colours
Phoenix Price.......................£989.00

ASDG-SOFTWARE-Scanning software comes in two forms, integrated into art development as a new module or used as a stand-alone programme.
Phoenix Price..................£109.99

ACCESSORIES STUFF

Control Centre..............................£34.99
Heavy duty construction,rubber edging, perfect colour match, makes an ideal workstation for the A500/A500+ **A 600 control centre now available.**

DATA SWITCHES- *(25 pin D type)*
2 way..£15.99
3 way..£17.99
4 way..£19.99

STORAGE:
90 Capacity BANX.........................£11.99
150 Capacity POSSO......................£16.99
Disk Box 10 Cap.............................£1.99
Disk Box 25 Cap.............................£2.99
Disk Box 50 Cap.............................£4.99
Disk Box 100 Cap...........................£6.99
Disk Box 120 Cap...........................£7.99
Top grade, heavy duty injection moulded boxes. Low cost, high quality.

AMIGA RELEASE 2

Now Only..



£79.99

The popular upgrade kit for 1.2 / 1.3 owners from Commodore is in stock and selling fast!

SOFTWARE

WORD PROCESSING / DTP
Kindwords 3.......................................£36.99
Final Copy 2 .... NEW! £66.99
Professional Page 3............ NEW! £129.99
Saxon Publisher.................... NEW! £189.99
Pagestream v2.2 ....£126.99
Pagestream Font pack 1 ....£44.99
Pen Pal 1.4..................... SPECIAL OFFER £39.99
Prowrite v3.X £57.99
Quickwrite £36.99
Wordworth £79.99
Hot Links £52.99

INTEGRATED PACKAGES
Gold Disc Office £59.99
Mini Office .... NEW! £39.99

CAD & DRAWING
Design Works £53.99
Professional Draw 3 ...... SPECIAL OFFER £79.99
Intro CAD Plus £74.99
X CAD 2000 ....£99.99
X CAD 3000 ....£269.99

UTILITIES
Lattice 'C' v6......................... NEW! £214.99
A-Talk 3 ....£44.99
Cross Dos v5 *(inc, Cross PC Emulator)*........£29.99
Diskmaster 2 ....£43.99
Dos 2 Dos £29.99
Opus Directory £29.99
Xcopy £36.99
Quarter Back £45.99
Quarter Back Tools Vs 5..........................£49.99

DATABASE
Superbase Pro 4 ....£164.99
Superbase Pers 2 .... NOW ONLY £39.99

VIDEO PRODUCTION/TITLING
SCALA 500 ....£79.99
SCALA Professional £219.99
Big Alternative Scroller £35.99
Broadcast Titler 2 ....£179.99
Font Pack 1 for Broadcast Titler 2 ....£88.99
Font Enhancer for Broadcast Titler 2..£88.99
Pro Video Post £168.99
TV Show Pro £51.99
TV Text Pro £84.99

FRACTAL AND SPECIAL FX
Race Trace .... NEW! £93.99
Deluxe Paint 4 ....£63.99
Deluxe Video 3 ....£71.99
Image Finder £44.99
Pixmate £43.99
Scenery Animator £62.99
Vista £43.99
Pro Vista £71.99

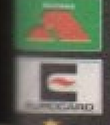
ANIMATION
Take 2 ....£42.99
Image Master £129.99
3-D Images £36.99
Amos £36.99
Amos Professional.................. NEW! £44.99
(97% in CU Amiga-Software release of the year)
Amos Compiler £21.99
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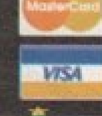
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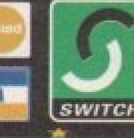
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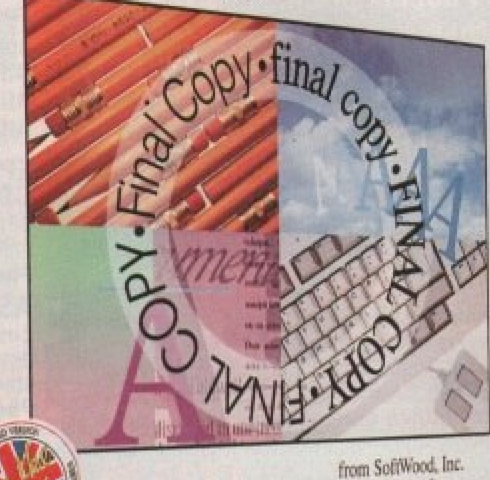
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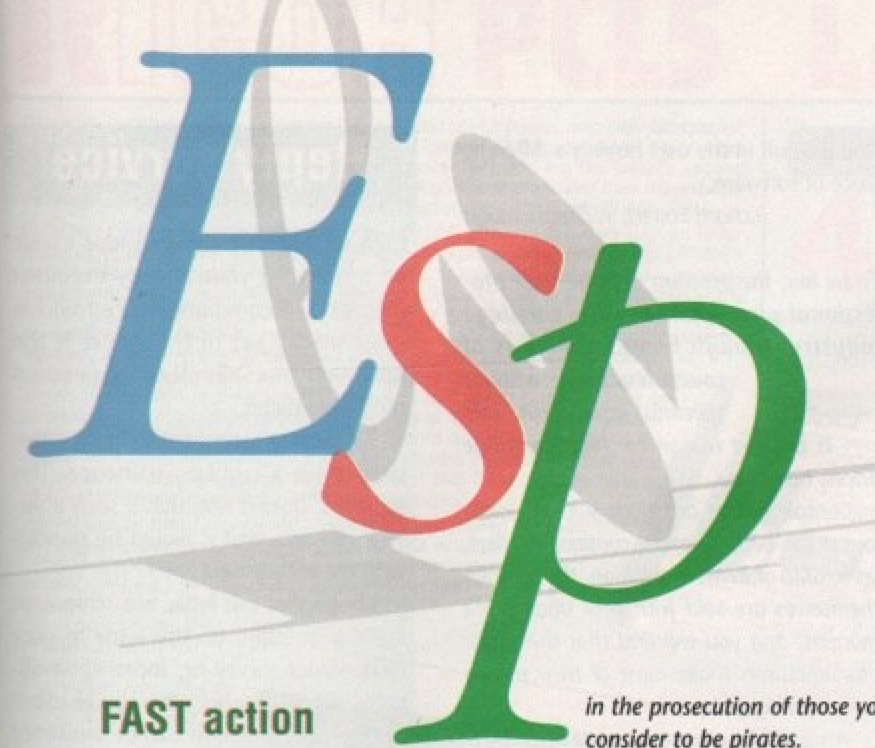
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Ezra Surf's Postbag

Got something to say through the pages of AC? Ezra Surf is our mailman, dedicated to sitting in a corner reading your letters and selecting the most interesting for publication.

Drop him a line at:

Ezra Surf's Postbag, Amiga Computing, Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP.

Please don't enclose saes as Ezra just hasn't got enough paper to reply personally. He might also have to shorten your letters, so don't be offended if you end up getting the chop.

FAST action

I think it's needless to say that you are the best Amiga magazine in the world (needless? Say it all you like! – Ed).

I have written to you once again about piracy, and this time I'm sending you some names and addresses of pirates all over Europe.

I would like a reward from FAST, and if they'd send me what I'm asking I'll send another 20 addresses of English pirates for free.

I would like to inform them and to give to them these addresses and details of what I'm asking for.

Michael Arvanitis, Piraeus, Greece

The sealed paper you included with your letter has been passed to Bob Hay at FAST, but don't be surprised if the people named within it are not arrested at once.

FAST receives a great many phone calls and letters concerning pirates and alleged pirates, but have resources to follow up only those for which there is evidence or a likely chance of successful prosecution If your letter to FAST contains simply a list of names and addresses, it is unlikely to result in the prosecution of those you consider to be pirates.

However, if you supply FAST with pirated software and proof of its purchase, or some other solid evidence of piracy connected to an identifiable individual, they will act at once.

Your concern and willingness to act is greatly appreciated, and we urge you to keep up the good work.

It's a giveaway

As an Amiga owner of a few years now, I have collected a wide range of PD software, and although I only recently started teaching myself to program the computer, I have now written a public domain program. The problem is I now realise I haven't a clue how to release it.

Please print an answer to my question, as there is no program of its kind, and I think it will benefit a number of Amiga owners.

Chris Dobson, Bingley

Releasing a PD program is as simple as appending some documents to it stating your intention that it be PD, then sending the disk to a number of PD libraries or uploading it to a few bulletin boards.

If you wish to retain copyright of your program to stop commercial software authors using the idea to make money, say so in the documents.

As soon as you write and publish something, be it a program or a piece of text, it is your artistic copyright, so don't worry about the legal aspects.

If you wish the program to be shareware, state so in your documents and provide information on what donation to make, how to register, and where to send the registration fee.

A good bet if you're unsure about how to do this is to study the documents attached to many of the programs on the Amiga Computing CoverDisk, *as these are often written and distributed by experienced shareware authors.*

C Compendium

I am learning the C programming language, and find your Almanac programming column very interesting. What would be even more useful is a compilation of all the programming features ever published in AC.

I'm sure I'm not the only person stuck with books that don't even mention sprites or sound or IFF picture files.

By the way, a note to anyone starting C – NorthC from Amiganuts United is an excellent, easy to use compiler, complete with editor. I highly recommend it.

And finally, has anyone else had trouble with the CLI command Install? The common "Install Drive DF0:" asks for Workbench, loads the command, then tries to install Workbench!

After hours of thinking, I came up with the solution. Copy the command to RAM and use it from there.

Richard Wilson, Newton-on-Ouse

Thanks for the tip, though if you'd followed our beginners' column early in 1992, you wouldn't have had to sit for hours working it out.

Having said that, the best way to learn is to figure something out for yourself, so ➤

Not a bum deal

I have just purchased a CDTV after selling my A500 Plus, so you could imagine my apprehension and the niggly doubts about whether I was doing the right thing. Well, readers, CDTV is fandabulous.

It is far more compatible with floppy-based programs than my A500 Plus, and yeah it's a Workbench 1.3 machine, but what programs came out to utilise the Plus's extra capabilities except a few hacks?

Even if CD programs never take off, it's not a bum deal. CDTV is a very high quality audio CD which would cost you an arm and a leg. It has remote control and plays CD+G. What audio player can say as much?

Also, it's an Amiga in a very tidy box with an internal fan to keep it cool. Best of all, I have the entire Fred Fish PD library on one CD, and all this for less than a return to Madrid for two.

Wait for the day when Monkey Island 3 or Eye of the Beholder 3 arrives on a single CD rather than a van load of disks. Think about it.

S Wilkinson, Bedford

Hmm ... I can't help wondering from the number of recent CDTV plugs if an internal Commodore memo might not have circulated to the effect that all employees were expected to write to Amiga magazines and extol the virtues of CDTV.

Joking aside, everything you say about CDTV is true, and doubly so since the price drop last month. The only worry I have at the moment is that at the recent Amiga show in London, many software houses were present, but only a few were demonstrating even demos on the machine, let alone CDTV-specific titles.

Let's hope this situation improves.

Calling Croatia

Esp Prize letter

My name is Matija Babic and I live in Croatia. This year, I finished my classes, and now I'm going to high school for computers. One of my English friends sent me your very best magazine, *Amiga Computing*, but I don't have money to buy it.

Please, if you can, send me some pictures and text from your new issue. I really love the Amiga, but I have a C64, so I hope that if I can't play on an Amiga, at least I can read about it.

I hope I didn't take much of your time. Thanks in advance for help. Sorry for my English, but they don't teach it in schools – all I know is from games and television.

Matija Babic, Zagreb

Your English, if learned from TV and games, is startlingly good, and not something you should apologise for. We are pleased to help you, and a copy of the December issue is in the post as I type.

Now it's the turn of our regular readers! Your full address is printed below in the hope that some of our helpful Amiga enthusiasts will send back issues so that you can read to your heart's content.

If this helps your linguistic progress, so much the better.

Matija Babic
Aleja Partizanskih Pilota 5
41010 Novi, Zagreb, Croatia

OK, folks, get those seasonal hats on and send Matija some pressies.

Esp

well done. I hope you find the Mastering The Amiga *book on this month's cover of help in your future struggles.*

As for compiling the programming features in one magazine or booklet, it's something we've thought about in the past and decided against because we felt there was not enough interest.

However, if enough beginning coders were to request such a booklet, we might be tempted.

Star search

Each month I purchase a copy of *Amiga Computing* for my daughters, and more often than not I find myself in the position of hogging not only the magazine but the computer for many hours.

I began, after a period of time, to reminisce about my misspent youth sat in a Star Wars simulator game down at the local amusement arcade happily playing away until all my pocket money was spent.

Anyway, enough bout my past, as the wife would say, I need help and plenty of it.

Over the past three months I have tried to no avail all possible avenues available to me to find and purchase the Star Wars Trilogy game, but I have often drawn a complete blank. Using your many contacts, could you please help me with my dilemma and find a copy of this game so that I can yet again feel complete and reminisce to my heart's content about my mis-spent youth? I await some kind of reply with great anticipation.

P Mellors, Bournemouth

The Star Wars games were produced by Domark (081-780 2222), then released in compilation form some years later. Whether or not they are now de-listed I don't know, though I suspect they are.

Try Domark, and if they can't supply you with the games, place an ad in our classifieds section. One of our readers may be prepared to send you the disks or do a swap, you never know.

Piracy excuse

How can companies say piracy leads to higher prices? Just look at the prices for the uncopyable console games. Imagine paying £35 for a game which has the same graphics, sound, and playability as a C64.

If piracy was stopped, it would not result in more games being sold because nobody would have more money to buy the extra games.

You could say someone will not buy an original product if they have access to the pirated version, but this would not hurt the industry as the money saved would result in the user buying a different piece of software.

Richard Borrett, Wellingborough

To be fair, the problem of large-scale professional piracy is rife in the cartridge industry, though home copying is of course impossible without specialist equipment. This is not the reason for high cartridge prices, however.

Console games are often sold at ridiculous prices because many contain, in effect, up to 6Mb of RAM. In addition, the consoles themselves are sold with very small profit margins, and you will find that the major manufacturers make most of their money from cartridge sales.

What will be a more accurate measure of industry claims about piracy will be the expected CD-ROM explosion. If CD-based titles sell for the same price as floppy-based games once the market begins to expand, the piracy argument will be scotched and the industry's cynical profit-making exposed.

Short and sweet

Value for money is, I suppose, a personal thing, but after some more than favourable write-ups I set forth and spent more than £20 on Lure of the Temptress, then sat down ready to witness those comments over weeks of puzzle solving.

After two evenings, I was in a state of shock to wander into a location and find it was the end sequence. Being new to computing and a novice at adventures, I couldn't see how hardened gamers, including yourselves, would find this the least bit taxing.

Don't get me wrong, I agree with all that was said about the game, it's just that there's not enough of it compared to Bloodwych, an old game that took me months with no disk swapping at all.

Where is the value for money? For me, VFM is a game like Monkey Island 2 or Bloodwych, or any game that takes a lot of time to finish and gets you thinking.

Graphics, though nice, are nothing without gameplay, and I suspect all Lure's disk space was taken up by graphics and sprites.

All said, I enjoyed what there was, and think this game could have hidden value in that it could be a good introduction to adventures for children. I'd buy a sequel providing there was more to it, but that would require a full no stones unturned review.

Anthony Blackhurst, Hawes

Ah ... um ... slight problem here. The Gamer guys are a dedicated lot and do their best to give each and every game a right good hammering.

However, there are occasions when perhaps they don't have time to complete a game or – rarely – haven't the ability to finish it.

They usually make an effort to point out where a game will have less lasting appeal than others, but it isn't always possible. Rest assured we'll be looking long and hard at any new graphic adventures with value for money in mind.

Reply service

I am writing to convey an idea I have on improving your already excellent magazine. A common feature I find in most magazines of this genre is the statement "no SAEs please" on each of the letters pages.

To merit a statement in print I suspect this is a regular occurrence. This suggests, does it not, that if such a service was provided it would be popular with the readership.

I hope that this letter will achieve, at least, a question on this issue in your next reader survey or, more optimistically, a trial period whereby readers' queries and problems can be answered in return for an SAE.

Philip Bitis, London

Sorry to disappoint you, Phil, but if we were to offer such a service, we would spend so much time answering letters that we'd never produce another issue of the magazine.

There are so many hundreds of letters that we'd either have to spend all our time, as it would be impossible to employ people for the job.

Replies in the Ezra column, whether in person or in print, are statements direct from the magazine to the readers, and as such have to be written by Ezra (me!). Sorry, but there you have it.

Suffering from archive agony?

Concerning the few, and I should imagine it's just a few, *AC* readers complaining about the archiving process on the last few CoverDisks, one letter in ESP complains about PD disks not being full, yet the *AC* disks are crammed to the top. I know which I'd rather have.

As long as the directions on these disks are clear and workable, I think I'd much rather have my *AC* disks. Put them all in the melting pot, I say!

I know the Quadrix game didn't de-archive on my WB1.3 machine, but it's working now, and it's nice to watch what's happening when one archives a program.

Sorry to have to say this, but your Home Accounts disk had a little bug in it. The archive calls for Home Accounts2, but the disk has the name HomeAccounts2. Your customers will have to rename the disk from Workbench by putting a space between Home and Accounts.

I have had my Amiga and bought *Amiga Computing* since June 1991, and in that time I've had no trouble except for Quadrix.

This includes no problem with viruses, missing disks or damaged disks. I have tried all the other dedicated Amiga mags, but this is the best. Oh, and keep on your soap box, Ezra old chap! Keep on telling your customers to get themselves a proper killer.

Chris Shea, Swansea

Thanks for the testimonial, Chris. Glad you like the magazine, and hope you continue to do so for a long time.

As for the archiving debate, we kept well clear of the technique for three years because we thought it might cause problems, and it turns out we were right.

However, our techie bods are on the case and they assure me that all future archives will be fine.

One small problem remains in that Kickstart 2.04 has a bug when formatting a disk in the internal drive. If the disk you booted from is write-protected, every disk you try to format from that disk will appear as if it is write protected, regardless of the position of the protect tab.

This is Commodore's fault and it is a widely documented bug recently fixed with Kickstart 2.05. All those A500 Plus owners out there who have had problems should simply write-enable the CoverDisk, re-boot, and de-archive from there. Problem solved.

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Maximum resolution in dots per inch	300 x 300	300 x 300	300 x 300	300 x 300	400 x 400
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Print Speed	6ppm	4ppm	4ppm	5ppm	6ppm
Straight Paper Path	YES	-	-	-	YES
PCL 5 Printer Command Language	-	YES	YES	-	YES
HP-GL/2 Vector Graphics included	-	YES	YES	YES	YES
Resolution Improvement/Enhancement	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Standard RAM	0.5Mb	1Mb	1Mb	1Mb	2Mb
Full A4/300 dpi graphics with standard RAM	-	-	-	-	YES
Warm Up Time	<45 secs	<60 secs	60 secs	33 secs	45 secs
First Page of Text Output	<20 secs	<40 secs	34 secs	20 secs	<15 secs
Document Description Language included	-	-	-	-	YES
Flash ROM	-	-	-	-	YES
Upgradable Firmware	-	-	-	-	YES
IC Card Slot	YES	-	-	YES	YES
Scalable Resident Fonts - in HP LJ III Emulation	-	8	8	0	8
Resident Bit-Mapped Fonts	11	14	14	16	14
AGFA Intellifont Scalable Font Technology	-	YES	-	-	YES
HP LaserJet III Emulation Included	-	YES	YES	-	YES
EPSON FX Emulation Included	YES	-	YES	-	YES
IBM ProPrinter Emulation Included	-	-	YES	-	YES
Standard Tray Capacity	100	70	100	200	100
Protective cover on standard tray	YES	-	YES	YES	YES
Cost per copy**	1.65p	2.00p	1.71p	1.64p	1.65p
Min-Max Paper Weight in gsm	60-157	60-105	60-120	60-131	60-157
Able to print on OHP Film	YES	YES	YES	YES	YES
Able to print on card (157gsm - Manual Feed)	YES	-	-	-	YES
Standby -Noise Level	<40dB	31.7dB	<35dB	38 dB	<38dB
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LAA 5225	OPC Cartridge (Drum)	£89.00
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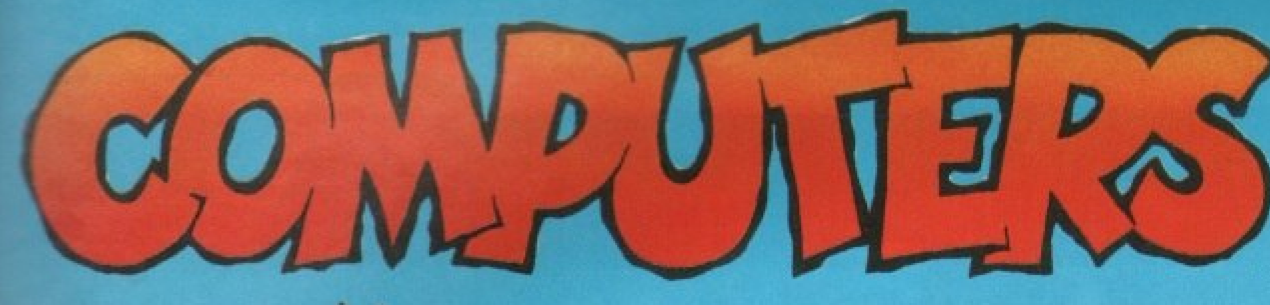
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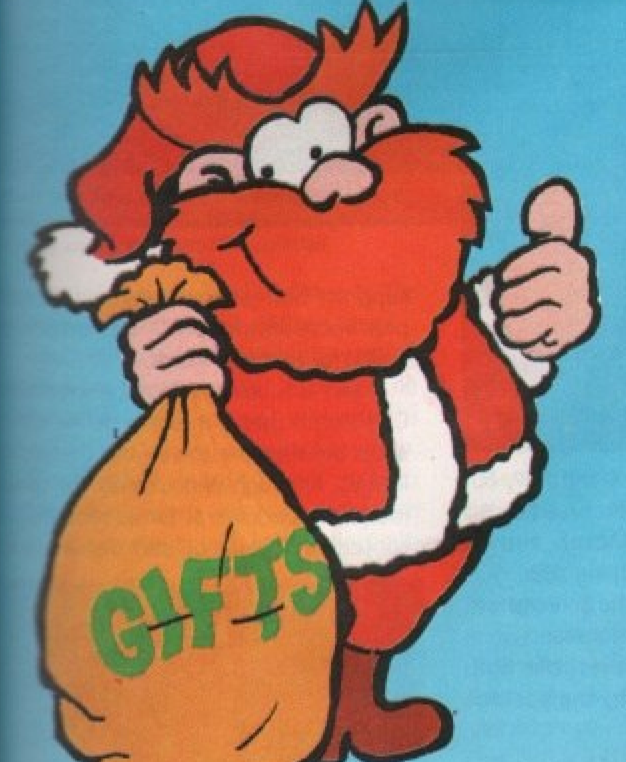
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4

Altered images

Paul Austin takes a long lingering look at Image FX, GVP's latest graphics spectacular

Never has an imminent software release been quite so imminent for quite so long. First we had Montage, then Mirage and now at long last GVP have finally thrown copious amounts caution to the wind and plumbed for ImageFX.

Regular readers may remember *AC's* exclusive preview of Montage – as was – in our September image processing special.

Since those beta-testing days, ImageFX has come a long way, implementing all the features hinted in the early days while adding a few new twists fit to whet even the most discerning artistic appetite.

The software and attendant donkey-choking manual come in the now almost mandatory ring-bound hardback, complete with an Scala style storage sleeve – ideal for easy access and perfect to impress your friends.

Installation as you'd expect is simple, however the results are fairly surprising as not one but four separate programs appear in the newly created ImageFX drawer. Alongside the expected ImageFX the additional contents include ImageFX_WB, CineMorph and the curiously titled IMP.

As the name suggests, the ImageFX_WB program allows you to open the program on the Workbench window, providing the power of ImageFX in the style of a commodity, instantly accessible as and when required.

This instant access is further enhanced by a "put to sleep" button which appears on both versions of ImageFX allowing the user to temporarily iconify the program while either retaining or disposing of any images already present.

The only notable difference between the custom and Workbench version is the lack of a Preview option within the latter.

Buffer

However, this doesn't mean you can't view images, as simply rendering the selected buffer instantly throws the current image to the rendering medium of your choice, whether that be a standard Amiga mode or alternatively a dedicated display device such as the IV24, HAM-E, DCTV and the like.

Although the difference between preview and render may be rather confusing, all will be explained a little later, but for now perhaps the simplest analogy is to describe the Workbench option as an ADPro-style environment, where you only see the effects of your actions when the render option is applied.

Conversely, the custom screen counterpart provides a constantly updated preview every step of the way. The next program in the collection, CineMorph, may already be familiar thanks to last month's Morph Mania spectacular. Like ADPro's MorphPlus, the program can run as either a standalone or in the case of ImageFX as a Hook or plug-in module which can be loaded directly from ImageFX on request.

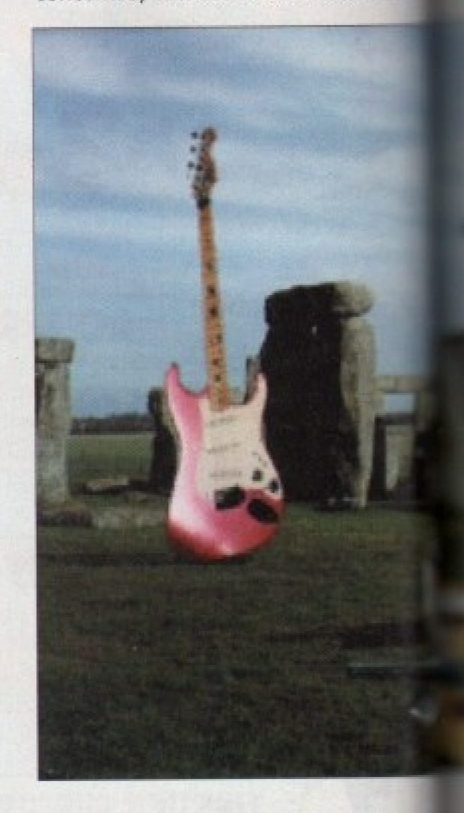
Due to last month's feature, I'll concentrate primarily on ImageFX and IMP, but for those who missed the last issue here's a brief synopsis of CineMorph and its assorted morphing and warping skills.

As you can see from the screenshots, CineMorph employs a dual screen system for source and target images. Like both MorphPlus and Image Mr, the package supports both static warps and mor
plus animated morphs – alas there'
option for animated warps.

Again as is obvious from the screen
CineMorph uses a mesh to define di
ences between the source and destin
images. Although undoubtedly the fa
morphing package as far as render
concerned, it must be said that a ce



A greyscale preview screen, an extremely ... mode if you're without a suitable display ...



Using the toolbox

Now we're reaching the heart of ImageFX. Although fairly bland, the toolbox is undoubtedly where most time will be spent. Like its predecessors, ImageFX offers an impressive array of processing tools and special effects including, balancing, composition, sizing, rotation, convolutions, transformations, filtering, Alpha channel support, special effects, brush handling, ARexx and last but not least the invaluable Hooks.

The Hooks apply pre-designed ARexx programs to produce additional SFXs, but perhaps more importantly allow access to external programs such as the aforementioned IMP and CineMorph.

Aside from image processing, the Toolbox is also the home of the program's built-in painting tools. These tools include all the classics which benefit *en masse* from the added power of a true 24-bit painting environment thanks to features such as optional alpha channel, gradients, trace through, rub through, saturation, colorize (sic), hue and so on.

One of the few faults of the painting environment is the limited number of display formats offered during preview. These are ei
IV24, Amiga, Firecracker or HAM-E. Obviously if you're without
of the three aforesaid display boards you're stuck with basic Am
graphics.

Alas in this case basic really means basic with just 16 lo-
colours or greyscales plus optional HAM. These va
between straightforward colour, dithered colour, the aforem
tioned greyscale with HAM remaining strictly old-st
4,096 lo-res.

Although bearable when image processing as a rough guide
the 24-bit buffer such basic Amiga graphics simply aren't go
enough for serious applications. No doubt GVP would like us al
rush out and buy an IV24. Back in the real world it simply i
going to happen.

Zz ? [Empty] 0 x 0 R G B UNDO
Full | Balance | Composite | Rotate | Size
Color | Convolve | Transform | Filter | Effect
Buffer | Brush | Alpha | Hook | Arexx
Scanner | Palette | Toolbox | Render | Print
Load | Save | Prefs | Quit
(IMAGEFX.1) ImageFX 1.01 (4-Nov-92) -- © 1992 Nova Design Inc., All Rights Reserv

PREFERENCES

Modules:	Options:	General Options:
Preview...	Preview Options...	✓ Interlace Panel?
Scanner...	Default Paths...	Close Workbench?
Render...	Virtual Memory...	Disable Undo?
Printer...	File Requester...	Use Coordinates?
Quantize...	Screen Palette...	Create Icons?
		Use Metric Units?
Save Keys...	Load Keys...	✓ Toolbox Palette?

Save | Load | Use | Cancel

An impressive array of savers, almost on a par with ADPro

Save Format:

Working Screen | Rendered Image | 24-Bit Buffer | Separate Buffer

ILBM
JPEG
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Save | Save As | Cancel

A truly excellent interface in creation

amount of speed is sacrificed due to the rather cumbersome mesh editing system.

The results of the morphing/warping process can be spectacular, especially on soft features such as eyes and mouths which lie on a fairly uniform backdrop. Unfortunately CineMorph isn't quite as strong when dealing with hard edges such as profiles or images with hard distinct outlines. When morphed or warped, hard edges do tend to "ghost" around the edges rather than transform with the same degree of accuracy offered by both Image Mr and to a greater extent MorphPlus.



Having made a point of the program's ghosting problem it's worth stressing that in effect CineMorph comes as almost a freebie – very appealing considering that CineMorph in its stand alone form retails at a staggering £99.95.

The last software surprise is mysterious IMP which when stripped of its acronym becomes the ImageFX Multi Processor. Although you'd never guess from the title the IMP is a batch editor in the style of ADPro's FRED.

> *IMP brings batch processing to the masses...*

Fortunately for the novice it's much easier to use than the aforesaid FRED, but in turn does sacrifice a lot of the sophistication and flexibility available from its ADPro friendly counterpart. Like CineMorph, IMP operates as a hook as well as a pseudo-standalone which opens the IMP interface alongside the ImageFX_WB program as a processing tool.

As you can probably see, the interface is pretty simple with a main and swap field for source images plus an excellent Alpha channel option which allows you to use a predefined series of greyscale masks as a transparency filter between the two source images.

Below the Alpha lurks the essential destination field, which as you'd expect works as a definable repository for your animations, rendered images or batch-processed 24 bits.

Next comes the First/Last file parameters closely followed by the render, anim, or 24-bit output. Other processing essentials include palette lock which when active applies the palette of the first frame to all subsequent images.

Delete frames does as suggested, while "wait for source" simply instructs IMP to wait for all frames to be created by an external source prior to executing the batch. The Prep and Proc options are perhaps the most impressive of all the available gadgets.

The Prep option allows you to specify either a single or selection of commands to be applied prior to processing, while Proc allows a separate selection to be applied after processing.

Fortunately no knowledge of ARexx is required as long as you stick to the supplied ImageFX commands. Customising the commands and the required rendering format is simply a matter of defining the required effects within ImageFX before clicking the begin button.

As a result, once batch processing begins IMP simply reads the existing settings within ImageFX and acts upon them.

Although fairly unassuming, IMP is in my opinion one of the strongest selling points of the ImageFX package, bringing batch processing to the masses without the need of any ARexx experience. For the busy graphic artist with neither the time nor the inclination to master ARexx, IMP is nothing short of a dream come true.

ImageFX itself is separated into five distinct areas, all of which have their own unique interface occupying a strip on the lower portion of the screen. The five areas are Scanner, Palette, Toolbox, Render and Print. Although each panel is unique to its intended application a few select gadgets are generic throughout the program. These include load, save, prefs and of course quit.

The load and save options, although self explanatory, do have a few surprise in store when applied. For example when loading images there's no format selection required, as the software automatically ➤

Going colour crazy

Colour organisation is an essential for any self-respecting image processor and here again ImageFX scores well with a whole selection of spreads and swaps, grabs and saves, pick options and ranging features.

KidSplash.jpeg (JPEG) 736 x 480
RGB | All | Range | Copy | Swap | Pick | Load | Render | Lock | Spread | Sort | Grab | Save | Undo
Scanner | Palette | Toolbox | Render | Print | Load | Save | Prefs | Quit
(IMAGEFX.1) ImageFX 1.01 (4-Nov-92) -- © 1992 Nova Design Inc., All Rights Reserved

The available pots for colour placement default to 32 but with the assistance of the program's add and subtract arrow gadgets the selection can vary from just two colours up to a maximum of 256.

Building colours from the ground up is equally well catered for with RGB, HSV, CMY, YIQ and YUV colour space models. If you prefer to pick colours rather than create them, a toggle gadget allows you to select colours either from a default palette or alternative the palette provided by the rendering process.



Rendering

As the name suggests, it's here where you can see your creations in all their glory – providing you have a suitable display device attached. If however you don't have either an IV24, HAM-E or DCTV, I'm afraid you're stuck with standard Amiga modes.

However, all is not lost, especially if you own an A1200/4000, as it's here where at least some of the potential of the AGA has been applied.

ImageFX is totally at home with a 256-colour display which with the assistance of the four available dithering formats, three dithering styles – either left to right, right to left or zig zag – and three definable strength settings ensures that exceptional good results await in the resolution of your choice.

The software automatically senses which machine is being used and as a result automatically tailors the selection of screen modes and resolutions to suit.

Once the display method and dithering options are set simply clicking the render button instantly sends image to the device or screen.

As you may have guessed, thanks to the distinction between display and render it's impossible to actually edit the rendered image as it's designed purely to give the best possible representation of the 24-bit buffer.

With the program's modular design, the addition of new and existing display boards shouldn't be a problem. If GVP do the decent thing and issue preview modules for, let's say the Harlequin, Opalvision, Avideo or even DCTV, the success of ImageFX would be assured – the question is, will they?

If like me you're without either the now defunct HAM-E or an IV24 the only option left is to move to the Render screen and re-render the image for an accurate overview.

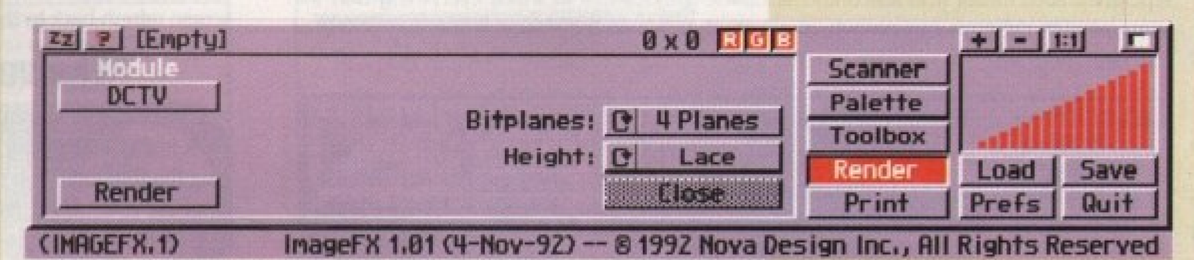
Although this provides access to a much wider selection of display formats, it invariably means painting is at best hit and miss and invariably much more time consuming than a normal paint package.

The next minor gripe is the actual application of the paint itself. Unfortunately GVP have insisted on sticking with the infamous "paint and wait" approach pioneered on the IV24.

For those unfamiliar with the IV24 and Macro Paint the problem appears whenever paint is applied to the canvas as only the outline of the effect is applied in real time.

For example, an airbrush first appears as a series of overlapping circles which are only replaced by the chosen colour after the stroke is complete.

A similar problem affects large brushes as they first appear as single pixel lines and only expand to their true size and colour after the event.




Quick and simple composition courtesy of the programs 24-bit double buffering

➤ loads as long as the particular format is already supported.

Such files include Alias, Anim, BMP, DCTV, DPIIE, FLI, GIF, HAM-E, ICO, IFF – including IFF24, Impulse, info, Jpeg, PBM, PCX, QRT, Rendition, Sculpt, Unix's PBM format, Targa, Tiff and VMEM. An impressive selection and no need to specify a thing.

Added twist

On the output side, things are equally impressive with an added twist of a whole selection of options including the ability to save the working screen, the rendered image, the 24-bit buffer itself and finally the swap buffer -again in its 24-bit form.

For the working, rendered and swap buffer images the save options include anim, BMP, Clipboard and ILBM, while for the 24-bit buffer the selection expands to Alias, BMP, Clipboard, ILBM, PBM, Jpeg, Rendition, Sculpt, Targa, Tiff, and VMEM.

Aside from the quit option the final ubiquitous gadget leads to the excellent Prefs screen which like IMP is a high point of the package. Although Prefs screens don't tend to lead to unbridled excitement this is a real exception.

On entry you're presented with a huge range of customising features, the most notable of which has to be the excellent virtual memory option which allows you to assign a drawer on hard disk as a temporary storage medium which will then masquerade as RAM.

This is nothing short of a masterstroke on the part of GVP. ADPro and to a lesser extent Image Master are notorious for their ravenous appetite for RAM which often means a massive investment in additional hardware or a major re-think of the project in hand.

As you might expect, VRam is noticeably slower than the real thing but thanks to intelligent design you can define when the option is to be applied.

For example, you can specify that VRam should be used only when required, either with or without a warning message or alternatively that it should always be used or perhaps ignored altogether.

> *'The virtual memory option is nothing short of a masterstroke'*

Other Prefs highlights include the option to define the Preview and Render options, which in the case of preview include Amiga, HAM-E, and IV24 as either greyscale, colour, dithered colour, or HAM – but no HAM8 I'm afraid. Rendering output fares a little better with Amiga 1.3/2/3, DCTV, EGS, Sage, IV24 and HAM-E, but unbelievably enough there's still no sign of HAM8.

GVP are promising a HAM8 update to the package but as yet it's still unclear how it is to be implemented and even worse whether the revision will be free or not.

This particular sin is compounded by the fact that the program is more than happy with all other screen modes available via WB 3.0. As a result, a super hi-res 256-dithered render is a piece of cake, so why no HAM8? Infuriating.

The remaining options deal primarily with customisation including a complete selection of definable paths for every input/output feature of the package plus the required presets for any scanners, frame-grabbers or printers attached to your system.

The only remaining generic option is the zoom controls which consist of three gadgets, two of which increase and retard the levels of zoom while the third allows instant screen refresh back to the default image size.

The verdict

If you read the preview of ImageFX way back in our September issue you may recall that the program won the title as potentially the best all-rounder. Now it's finally arrived that verdict remains pretty much the same.

Although the GVP marketing machine would argue otherwise, ImageFX certa[inly] doesn't blow either Image Mr or ADPro [out] of the water when it comes to pure im[age] processing power. However wh[ere] ImageFX really scores highly is its exce[llent] intuitive design, ease of use, flexibility [and] overall value for money.

If you class yourself as a general pur[pose] user ImageFX is probably the one for [you]. With ARexx, free anim generation, bu[ilt-in] scanning station, special effects, comp[osi]tion, morphing and printing, it's perhap[s as] close as the Amiga has yet come to an a[rtis]tic jack of all trades.

Printing

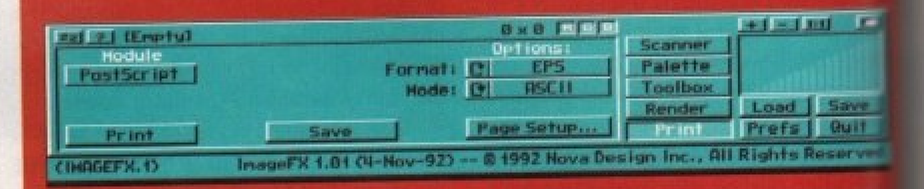
As is almost essential within any serious image processing package, printing is taken se[ri]ously. In the case of ImageFX the present options include 24-bit printing via preferen[ces] and perhaps more importantly full PostScript support.

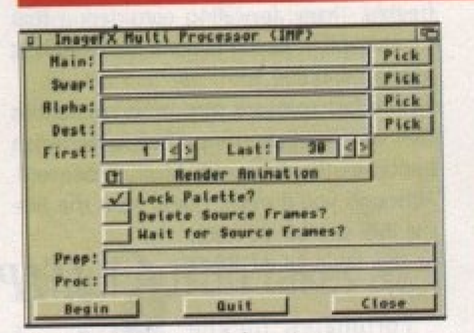
If you select the PostScript option you're presented with two choices, either to sa[ve] your creation as a full PostScript page or alternatively as an EPS – Encapsulated PostScri[pt] which can then be imported directly into any DTP package as either an Ascii or bin[ary] PostScript file.

Although PostScript support is fully implemented, it must be said that it's by no mea[ns] as comprehensive as either Image Mr or ADPro.

Nevertheless all the basic essentials are there allowing page and image sizing, ima[ge] centralisation plus the option to either ignore or retain aspect ratio.

As you'd expect with EPS support, GVP have included the ability to save the PostScr[ipt] image direct to disk rather than printer-only output. In short, a basic but effective system.





IMP, perhaps the one of the systems strongest selling points


A freebie with ImageFX, that costs £99.95 as a stand alone

Flexible scanning

Supported scanners and grabbers include the Espon ES300C, the Sharp JX100, Framegrabber and the IV24's IVFG. Alas there's no option for the latest Epson A4 scanners such as the ES-600C and ES-800C or the excellent Vlab frame-grabber.

Having said that, as with the majority of ImageFX functions scanners and grabbers are simple plug-in modules in the style of ADPro loaders which means in theory new releases only require a suitable module to join in on the act.

As you'd expect, all the necessary scanner setup options await including landscape and portrait, the essential mono preview, image cropping via definable boxes, DPI settings, separate colour or full RGB scans and of course greyscales – in short, everything that the scanners own software can provide plus instant access to the image processing power of the main program.





The bottom line

Ease of use = 9
Implementation = 7
Value for money = 9
Overall = 8

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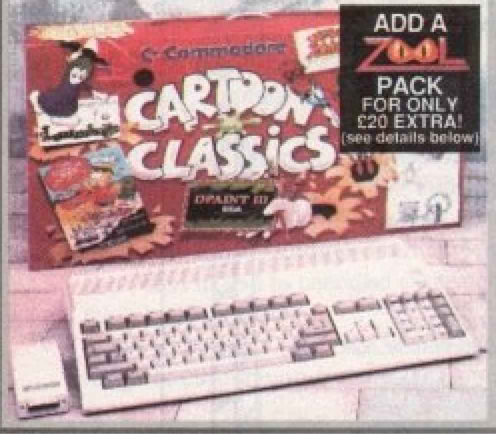
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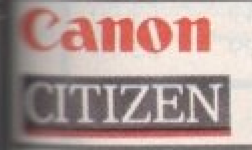
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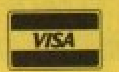
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Mouse Mat [ ] or Disk Box [ ]

VirusZ has a comprehensive boot block laboratory...

...and user-friendly preferences options

Digital diseases

As a host of new owners boot an Amiga for the first time, Stevie Kennedy takes a look at what could be their first disaster

The scenario is simple. You have quite happily swapped disks with friends, bought and used a selection of PD disks or, in some rare cases, booted from a magazine CoverDisk (not this one, I assure you), when calamity strikes. The Amiga starts to do strange things and your software suddenly stops working.

Chances are, me old matey, that you've been infected with a common or garden computer virus, and as if this isn't enough, it's also more than a little likely that it's your own silly fault.

Precautions are the name of the game when swapping disks every bit as much as when swapping sexual partners, and the user who exposes his or her machine to the ravages of Saddam or Lamer is usually guilty of negligence.

Computer viruses, once the subject of popular myth and superstition, have over the past two years been tamed by the majority of careful owners due, in no small part, to the efforts of a small band of dedicated shareware virus killer authors.

However, for those green users still wet behind the ears, the virus remains probably the most deadly threat to trouble-free Amiga use, and it is for those new owners that this article is repeated every year.

Having said that, treating the threat of viruses with contempt – usually brought about by the mistaken belief that today's virus killer will work tomorrow – is often the downfall of more experienced users, so we might all benefit from a refresher course.

There are two stages to virus security – prevention and cure. The first is immeasurably easier than the second and more effective, but it is surprising, judging from the number of readers' letters on the subject, just how many people either don't know the basic rules or never apply them.

Follow the guidelines laid out in this article and you should never suffer the agonising and strangely humiliating experience of viral infection. Fail to stick to a strict regimen of precautions, and heartache will – eventually – follow as surely as day follows night. Let's identify the enemy. A computer virus is a small piece of code whose primary purpose in life is to copy itself from one disk to another.

Secondary considerations depend upon the virus, but range from simple repeated duplication, damaging enough in itself, to deliberate criminal damage of data and program files.

I say criminal, because it is illegal to knowingly spread a virus, let alone invent one of your own, and if any of our readers can ever prove that someone has carried out such a sad and pathetic act I would hope they'd do the decent thing and call the police immediately.

Boot block viruses

The majority of Amiga viruses are known as boot block viruses, because they hide in the tiny amount of space kept to one side for the boot block on a disk.

Without a boot block, no disk will autoboot, and without a special custom boot block, few protected commercial games will work, so even the most primitive boot block viruses, sometimes irresponsibly described as "harmless", can be fatal.

A second and less numerous type is the file virus, so called because it exists on a

➤

Some basic safeguards to avoid infection

To avoid virus infection, the easiest precaution is to keep all disks write-protected unless data is to be saved to them. Despite scare-mongering reports a couple of years ago, it is impossible for a write-protected disk to become infected.

Step two is to find a good virus checker. Unlike some supposedly expert advisors, we won't attempt to list the various checkers in order of effectiveness, as the only useful checker is the best checker.

For example, a recent article in another Amiga magazine rated VirusX at number five in a list of ten best checkers.

Though good in its day, VirusX development has for long been abandoned by its author, Steve Tibbet, who made no bones about the fact that the program's design made updating it for all new viruses a tiresome and ultimately pointless task.

Since the middle of 1991, VirusX has been obsolete and, though still touted by most PD libraries (and the odd foolish magazine), should be avoided at all costs.

Similarly, some supposedly good virus killers have proved, after prolonged use, to be either inaccurate or inefficient. Master Virus Killer is bugged in many of its versions and refuses to work as a background 24-hour checker, limiting its otherwise comprehensive virus detecting ability. Nuke, which many now mistakenly believe to be the best checker, has an annoying knack of "finding" Saddam on a clean disk, even when the disk-validator has been copied from a fresh disk.

Such popularly promoted checkers, though worthy programming feats in their own right, should only be purchased from PD pundits as second-line defences and used in conjunction with a tried and tested checker until their effectiveness under fire can be gauged.

Step three is simply to apply the rules we have been urged to adopt for sexual relations – minimise your partnerships and always use a condom.

Translated to computer virus speak, this means don't swap and change disks with others whose virus defences may be nil, and when a new disk is introduced to your system, make sure that it has been thoroughly virus checked.

By applying the three golden rules, no user need fear for his or her disks. Ignore them and it won't be long before uncle Saddam or cousin Travelling Jack pops by to say hello.

disk as a separate file. These are by far the most dangerous, as they use a variety of cunning methods to disguise themselves, thus fooling your system defences.

Standard-link viruses, such as IRQ, will append themselves to a program file, often the first command run in the startup-sequence, then attempt to go unnoticed.

Unless a virus killer is intelligent enough to figure out that, say, the Setpatch command has suddenly grown in size or contains tell-tale code, link viruses will sneak through and cause their havoc at a later date.

Saddam

Others, sometimes called Trojan horses, will entirely replace the infected file, change their own name to suit, and sometimes even try to match the size of the original. A prime example of this virus type is Saddam, which became notorious shortly after the Gulf war, and which shot to fame when it was inadvertently distributed on the *Amiga User International* CoverDisk in December 1991.

Saddam replaces the disk-validator file, pads itself out to the same size as its host, then corrupts the bitmap on the disk's root block.

As the bitmap is a digital map of the disk, AmigaDOS sees that it is inaccurate, assumes the disk is unvalidated, and runs the disk-validator program in an attempt to sort out the problem. Hey presto, Saddam is invoked by the Amiga itself.

In addition, the infected disk will no longer work if Saddam is not running, which makes it a certainty that if a suitable virus checker is not used the disk is doomed.

Unlike some less aggressive strains, the Saddam virus, like the filthy little parasite it is, simply wipes out its host disk.

Saddam was just the first of a new wave of link viruses, varying in their sophistication, to hit the Amiga last year, and only a few virus killers have managed to keep up.

It is therefore pointless to assume that your checker is effective if you have been using it for more than about a couple of months.

By far the most effective method of ensuring that your defences are solid is to get hold of one or more good checkers, then register with the authors as a shareware user.

For a nominal fee you will be sent a new version of the program as soon as it is updated, saving you time and money scouring the PD columns, and a possible heart attack when your obsolete digital defences keel over at the first sight of a brand new virus.

Without such people as Steve Tibbett and John Veldthuis, the Amiga virus would be a much more dangerous opponent than at present.

Were it not for the efforts of these largely unrewarded authors, information concerning viruses would be scarce and effective killers as rare as rocking horse doo-doo. They deserve your support.

> *Saddam, like the filthy parasite it is, wipes out its host disk*

The best virus killers

The only virus killer I would recommend without reservation is Virus Checker from John Veldthuis. Now in v6.19 (at time of writing) Virus Checker has been constantly updated in line with the latest operating system changes and virus threats.

Saddam, Menem's Revenge and Travelling Jack are all catered for, and if any user doubts the program's abilities, a quick glance at the comprehensive list of viruses in John's documentation should calm any fears.

Like all good checkers, Virus Checker can be fired up by a disk's startup-sequence and used as a full-time sentinel, or can be kicked in from Workbench for the odd disk check.

In addition, the program's file virus check can be instigated at any time, and memory scans are available if the user suspects something funny is going on in RAM.

The program uses a "brainfile" to keep track of boot blocks – handy for those non-virus custom boot blocks which would otherwise prompt a virus warning, and a very friendly commodities-style interface is available to Workbench 2/3 users. VirusZ is probably the only other checker worth relying on at the moment. Its comprehensive library of link viruses (69 are covered by release 5.20), and a host of options including Boot Lab for boot block saves and loads, user preferences, and file/memory scanning abilities, give Göorg Horman's program a distinct edge over most other checkers.

Not as simple in operation as Virus Checker, VirusZ is a superb second-line package for those sticky moments when doubts begin to creep in. It has also undergone a life of thorough, regular upgrades, and shows no signs of obsolescence.

Another prime contender, BootX, has gained in popularity over the past year. I can't say how good it is as I've used it without relying on it, but reports from around the Amiga world are positive enough to make it is worth trying for a while in conjunction with either Virus Checker or VirusZ.

Safe hex

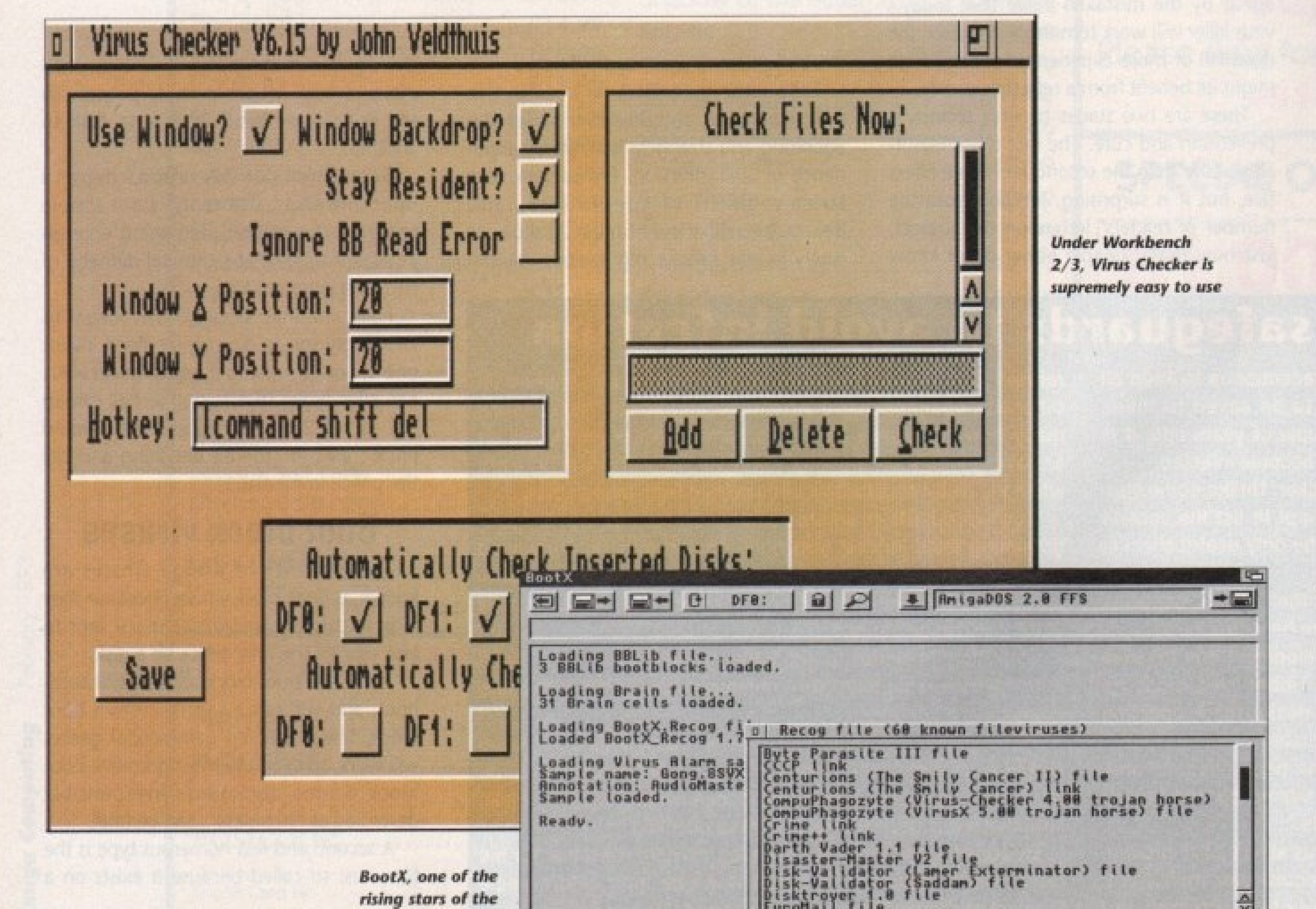
In an attempt to co-ordinate the fight against viruses, promote information exchange, and publicise the danger posed by viruses, a group of about 250 Amiga users, including a number of virus killer authors, came together last year to form Safe Hex International.

The group maintains a virus bank containing all known Amiga viruses (for killers to be tested on), releases virus killers at regular intervals, and offers a reward of $1000 for information leading to the prosecution of anyone found to have written a virus.

Any reader who is interested in either joining the fight against viruses or keeping in touch with an organisation offering the best and most up to date information should contact Erik Soerensen at:

Snaphanevej 10, DK-4720 Praestoe
Denmark, Phone: (+45) 55 99 25 12
FAX: (+45) 55 99 34 98

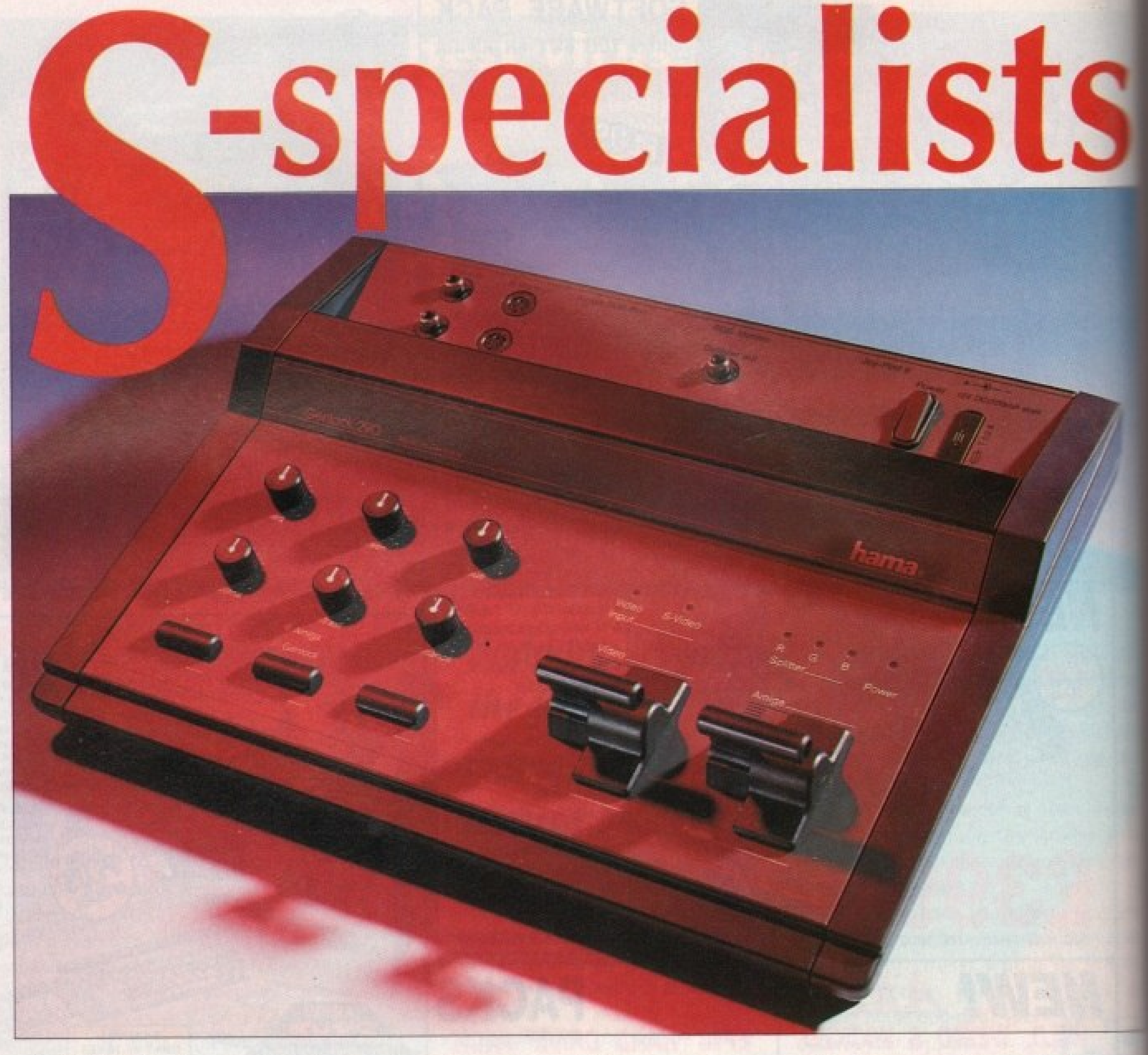
Speedy Gonzales, as Erik is otherwise known, will be pleased to receive any virus information, new viruses, or just moral support from Amiga users, so do us all a favour and get in touch.



Under Workbench 2/3, Virus Checker is supremely easy to use

BootX, one of the rising stars of the killer club

S-specialists



G-Lock and Hama represent the cutting edge of Amiga S-VHS genlocks. Paul Austin brings you the definitive guide to two true power products

Until recently S-VHS hardware has been way out of reach for the average videophile. Fortunately prices are tumbling and the time could be right to take the next step up.

We'll start our adventure with G-Lock the very latest offering from GVP, a unit which leads the field in the battle against inflated pricing by retailing at literally half that of its Hama counterpart. The question is, does the cash saving mean missing features?

The unit itself is a fairly bland black beastie offering RGB input from the Amiga via a 23-pin flexi connector plus the genlocking essential of an RGB pass-through which connects directly to either a monitor or at worst a modulator.

In addition to the RGB options sits a rather curious joystick connection which serves a dual purpose as both a power supply and means of input for the unit's secondary role as a colour splitter – ideal for both Vidi and Digiview.

Along the side await the essential I/O connections which for input consist of two CVBS/RCA phonos and a single S-VHS/Hi-8 mini-DIN. On the other side of the I/O coin await a single RCA phono out and of course the essential S-VHS mini DIN.

Pleasant

The final and rather surprising I/O option concerns sound. Again connected via a selection of phonos boasting two separate audio ins and a single/mono audio out.

Although a pleasant addition I must admit it's not exactly the ultimate audio/video answer primarily due to its mono only output.

To accommodate the feature software sliders allow adjustment of both bass and treble plus the overall volume. In addition a selection gadgets allow you to toggle between input channels or alternatively mix both signals into a single combined output.

Unfortunately there's no way to adjust the input gain of the audio signals. As a result, the relative mix between the two sources is defined purely by the strength of the incoming signals.

As a consequence you may still require an external mixer to achieve the desired effect, thereby cancelling out the advantage of the internal mixing options. Not perhaps the definitive answer to audio/video but nevertheless a worthy addition.

Once the software and hardware are safely installed, it's time to boot-up – a process which involves first activating the unit and then reboot to run the attendant software.

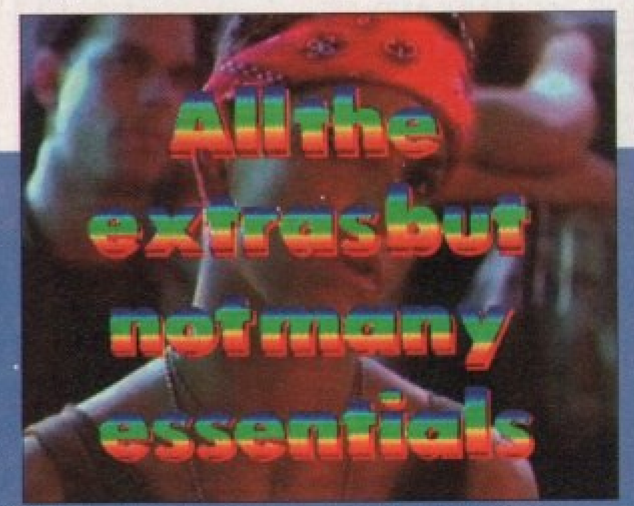
When active you're presented with the basic video control panel which can be toggled to reveal alternate audio panel. As the audio options have already been mentioned we'll stick to video control which consists of a signal indicator, a selection of sliders controlling colour, contrast, saturation and brightness – all of which relate to the outgoing video signal.

Following these come the three input gadgets which toggle between the two CVBS inputs and of course the single S-VHS/Hi8. Switching between them is instantaneous and can be achieved either via the control panel, a hot key combination or ARexx.

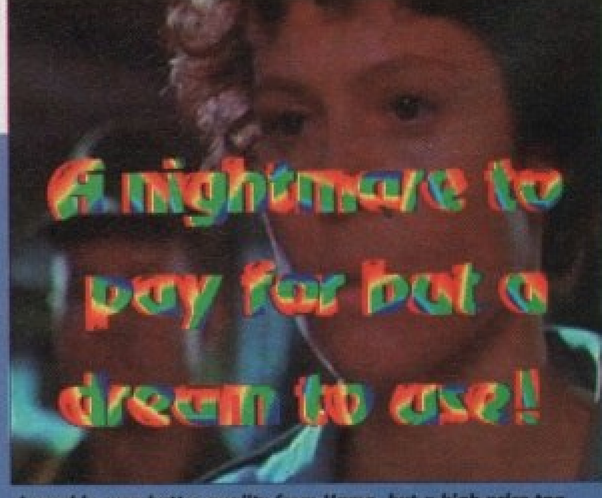
Alas G-Lock can only process a single video input at a time so there's no way to cross-fade between sources. In addition the connection of both CVBS and S-VHS simultaneously – although possible – is not recommended as signal interference between the two formats can cause real problems.

Although cross-fading is out of the questio[n] the unit does offer basic input switching vi[a] ARexx, illustrated by an accompanyin[g] script which fades one composite source t[o] black, swaps inputs and returns with th[e] second. Due to CVBS/S-VHS incompatibi[lity] this can only be achieved between the tw[o] CVBS signals.

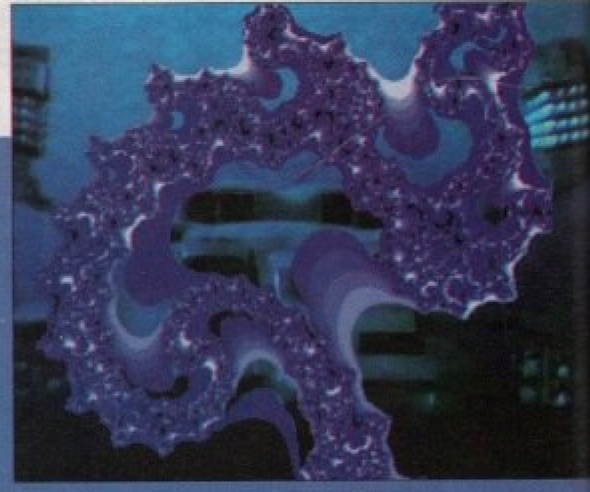
Beneath the input selection sit the fou[r]



The G-Lock in action, spectacular basics but no subtlety



Arguably even better quality from Hama, but a high price tag



Another Hama example attempting the tricky fractal test

essentials of modern Amiga genlocking in the form of an external option which simply operates as a pass-through for the incoming video signal.

This is followed by the Amiga option which in effect is the reverse of the above showing only the Amiga's output completely bypassing the incoming video signal.

Next comes overlay, the bread and butter of any self-respecting genlock, providing the classic combination of Amiga graphics above the incoming video signal.

Lastly we arrive at the inverse option which simply reverses the effect of the aforementioned overlay making colour zero opaque while transforming all other colours of the overlaid graphic transparent to the incoming signal.

Getting connected

Towards the rear of the Hama unit await the essential input/output options including composite and of course S-VHS. Alas there's only a single set for each format and alas just like the G-Lock there's no way to crossfade between them.

Having said that the unit does boast automatic single switching when either source is detected meaning that unlike the G-Lock the Hama is perfectly happy with both VHS and S-VHS recorders connected simultaneously.

Alongside the selection of video ports comes a CVBS digitiser out and a joystick connection which works in conjunction with both Digi-view Gold and De-Lux-View to automatically generate colour separations which are then sent sequentially to the aforementioned hardware.

The only other notable feature is the power rocker switch which curiously enough doesn't actually play at part when using the unit in conjunction with the Amiga.

This option has been added purely because of the Hama's secondary roll as an RGB-to-Pal or Y/C encoder. When used solely for this purpose the unit need not be connected to the Amiga and because it is then deprived of its primary power source a 12V DC PSU is required.

The only remaining connection is that of the RGB signal from the Amiga which slots into the rear of the unit and re-emerges in the form of the essential RGB pass-through, which like G-Lock connects to an attendant monitor or modulator

Below the keying options await the three definable setup gadgets which allow you to specify a complete keying and signal processing environment – including audio options – which can then be saved or toggled as and when required.

In addition to the basic audio and video controls another four control panels await – all of which are devoted almost entirely to G-Lock's primary strength of signal processor.

Extensive

As you can see from the control panel screenshots, the support for signal processing is very extensive and reveals G-Lock's real niche as a professional signal processing tool.

From the fourth advanced panel you can take advantage of the chromakey functions built into the AGA allowing you to specify a selection of colours as the keying channel. In addition you can also select any of the 8-bit channels as a keying medium in the style of the ECS.

As the more astute readers may have already spotted there's been virtually no mention of wipes, fades or indeed dissolves, and with good reason, as there are virtually none on offer, with the only exception being the aforementioned input switching.

Above all else this is the hardware's most damning indictment. Apart for the basic keying quality of a genlock – which admittedly is excellent – fades and dissolves are perhaps the most important feature of any general purpose genlock.

Without the ability to subtly move between keying states a genlock becomes almost useless to the average punter. Not only does G-Lock refrain from keying transformation either via ARexx, hot keys or hardware but it also offers no means of adjusting the amount of static effect applied in any of its keying modes.

The end result of this "all or nothing" approach means that G-Lock will almost certainly have a very limited appeal to the mass market. Unless you're the proud owner of an AB roll editing system, a separate video mixer and God knows what else, attempting to employ G-Lock with any degree of subtlety would be at best a difficult proposition.

For the average user with an Amiga, a titler and suitable video hardware it's safe to say G-Lock isn't the ideal choice, unless of course your artistic aspirations stretch no further than bog standard overlays and inversions with no intros.

Having suffered a severe slap in the face as far as punter appeal is concerned, it must be said G-Lock will have a degree of appeal to professionals, primarily thanks to its unrivalled signal processing and transcoding talents which leave all other Amiga friendly S-VHS units for dead.

Used with Scala or other such multimedia applications as a multimedia tool, G-Lock could nevertheless be useful for, say, corporate applications, where some of its omissions would not be required anyway.

Still, even with this on its side I can only envisage a select few who would be willing to invest such a sizeable sum for a signal processor which happens to boast basic genlocking as almost an afterthought.

It's possible you may have read a rather conflicting review of G-Lock in another surprisingly popular Amiga magazine. If that's the case it only goes to prove the old adage that you can't always believe what you read, especially if it doesn't appear in *AC*...

The basics of audio/video control plus a lone example of the four extra panels waiting in the wings

Hama

Although the Hama editorial is dwarfed by the G-Lock section, it's by no means a reflection on the product. The situation comes about simply due to the relative simplicity of what is a straightforward quality product with all the essentials plus a reasonable spattering of extras.

The most noticeable feature of the Hama is its overall look which basically screams quality from the moment it emerges from its packaging.

The most dominant feature must be the twin faders on the right of the unit, both of which are dampened to allow smooth and accurate transition between the Amiga and video signals.

To the left of the aforesaid sliders lurk the six video processing controls, the upper row of which allow variation of the RGB mix by a factor of plus or minus 30 percent, resulting in bizarre colourisation effects beneath the overlaid or inverted Amiga graphics.

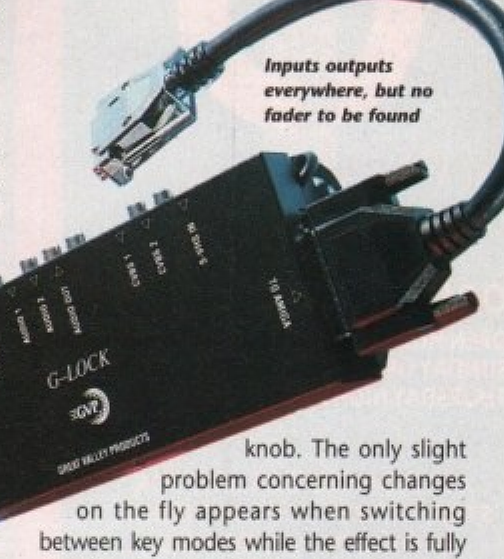
Below the RGB controls await the chroma – alias colour, contrast and finally luminance, otherwise known as brightness. As you might imagine these final three are primarily concerned with getting the very best from the available source.

Having said that, even here a few tricks can be applied. For example a simple effect such as overlaying colour Amiga graphics on top of an initially black and white video source which then gradually transforms to full colour. Simple but nevertheless effective.

Beneath the signal controls sit keying toggled buttons which like the G-Lock's software alternatives consist of a bypass, Genlock/Amiga and finally invert all of which operate in exactly the same manner as their G-Lock counterparts.

As you've probably guessed the Hama is essentially a simply product which easily wins an award as one of the simplest plug-in and go products on the market.

The actual keying quality in all states is nothing short of breathtaking especially when working with a S-VHS source. As for ease of use, again the Hama scores high with key mode switching and signal processing beginning a simple matter of tapping the odd button and twiddling the occasional knob. The only slight problem concerning changes on the fly appears when switching between key modes while the effect is fully applied, as occasionally screen glitches necessitate a fade out prior to application.



Inputs outputs everywhere, but no fader to be found

Although almost all of the above is basically a glowing testament to Hama's talents there is one area in which it does suffer. If you've happened to glance at the product box there's a chance its already been spotted – the jaw-dropping price of the unit.

Although excellent I must admit I'd like to see a few more whistles and bells for the £740 asking price. Such enhancements could include audio support and crossfades between an increased number of available inputs. Still having had my almost inevitable moan the Hama still remains the ideal choice for any would-be professional. If you can afford it, buy it. If youcan't,start saving...



SYSTEM ESSENTIALS

RED = Essential YELLOW = Recommend

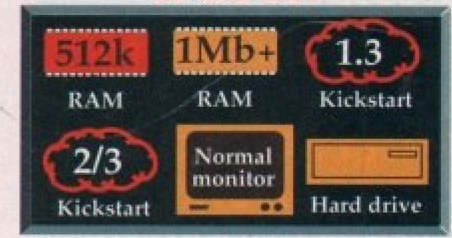
HAMA



The bottom line

Product: Hama
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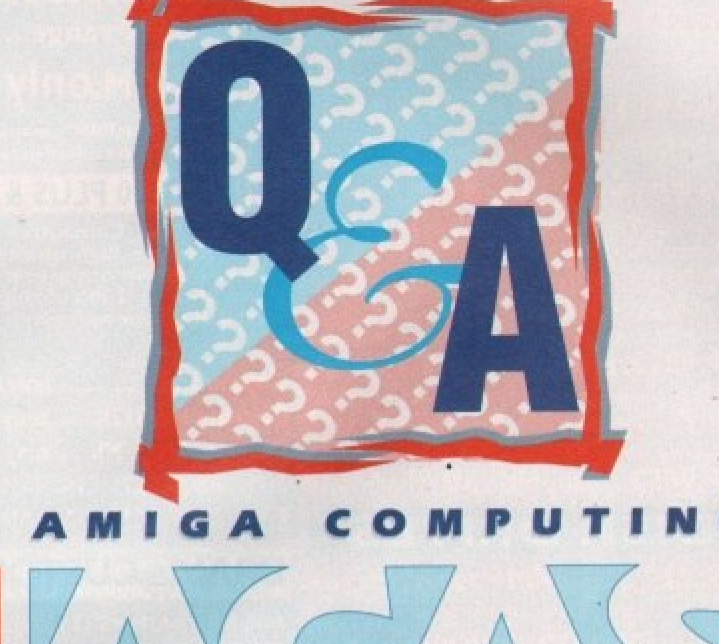
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1960 monitor

I am an Amiga user who currently owns an unexpanded A1500. I wish to expand my machine, but want to be able to upgrade to Commodore's new mid-range computer when it becomes available (probably the A2200, or A2400).

If I buy a Commodore 1960 multi-sync monitor, will I be able to use it without a flicker fixer? I have heard that some of these monitors suffer from various problems (pin-cushioning etc). Is there a test that I can make in the shop to see if the monitor suffers from this problem before I buy it?

Can you suggest a hard disk drive (around 52Mb) which is suitable for an Amiga (ie auto-parking and auto-booting), is reasonable cheap and would be most likely to have hardware compatibility with any new Amigas?

Also, Power Computing are selling a rewritable optical disk drive. Can this device be booted from under Workbench 2 and how reliable are they?

Jonathan Dale, Switzerland

Commodore's 1960 monitor is quiet a good choice and can be used without a flicker fixer, but to use it to its full potential you will need one.

Pin-cushioning is where the edge of what you are displaying is curved, so to test a monitor for this the best thing is to just display the standard Workbench screen and see if th and right sides of the screen cur or out.

As for which hard drive to bu choice would have to be a Qua 52Mb with either a GVP or N controller.

Unfortunately Quantums are S controlled and the new Am 1200/2200/2400 machines all c with IDE controllers on-board w are extremely slow compared SCSI controllers.

Some companies are planning S controllers for the new rang Amigas, though – inclu Commodore themselves.

The optical disk drive you h mentioned is quiet a good pro and can be booted from ei Workbench 1.3, 2 or 3. When tried the Floptical it handled very well indeed.

PCM cards

I hope that you can provide me w definitive answer regarding the me card slot of my CDTV.

The article in the December issu your magazine regarding the futu the CDTV proclaimed that the per als now becoming available fo A600 would be compatible wit CDTV via its standard PCMCIA c card slot.

It was therefore with great en asm that I reached for the pho

Does the AA chipset outperform a 386?

As the owner of an almost obsolete Amiga A1500, I was wondering what would be the next logical upgrade step now that Commodore have scrapped the promised A2200 model.

I already have a 16MHz 68020 accelerator with 32-bit fast RAM and 52Mb hard drive. I use my A1500 for just about everything fun but which isn't actually useful – programming, Midi sequencing, games, writing the occasional letter, artwork (well I think it's art, anyway) and ray-tracing.

Can the AA chipset be fitted in the A3000, and do Commodore have any plans to sell future A3000s with the AA chipset as standard?

And the 64-thousand dollar question – what about the cost? I have thought many times about smashing my piggy-bank and getting an SVGA-PC/386. Only the AA chipset would convince me not to. Time is running out, Commodore!

Just how fast can that monster processor access chip memory? A megabyte of fast memory never seems to go very far these days! By the way, how much does it cost for full-speed expansion RAM?

Is it really zero-wait-state at 25MHz when you disable the caches? Is a 68881/68882 an optional extra? I haven't yet aspired to a maths processor on my current system, although I enjoy a bit of ray-tracing.

I also want to play games as well as use serious applications. How compatible are games with the 68030? My 68020 has been very poor in this area. The only games I have which take advantage of it are Stunt Car Racer and Formula 1 Grand Prix. Most games don't even load.

I swear that Archer Maclean is trying to play a tune with the disk drive stepper motor on IK+!. What worries me is that even fairly recent games such as Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker don't run on my 68020.

To write in small print on a sticker on the box "not compatible with the Amiga A3000 and some 68030 chips" is just not on – any PC owner would have a fit if a game didn't run on his 80386 PC but worked fine on his friend's 8086 PC.

Now I've got that mini-editorial off my chest, thank you for taking the time to read this letter. My apologies for asking so many questions!

S Williams, Blackpool

Unfortunately it's hard to suggest which machine you should consider next, mainly because you use your machine for quite a number of applications.

Face it, is it compatibility you want or a better machine than your present one? If it's a better machine you want then go for the A4000.

OK, it costs around £2,000 plus VAT for a 52Mb hard drive, 2Mb chip memory and 4Mb fast memory machine, but it's definitely worth it.

Also Commodore have still got plans to produce the A2200 and possibly the A2400, which will h the new AA chipset and probably a 68020 or 68 and some internal expansion slots.

It's not clear if they will come with the maths processor on board already or if it's a factor upgra It is unlikely that Commodore will produce an A30 with the AA chipset in, as the A3000 used to be top of the range Amiga and now the A4000 has de nitely stolen that position.

As for how much memory costs, its about £50 Mb. The A4000 uses 72-pin SIMMs and yes, it is ze wait-state access.

As I mentioned earlier, it's hard to upgrade t new machine with more advanced chips fitted without running into compatibility problems.

Commodore have gone some way to try to red this problem by including a nifty hardw downgrade option which is triggered by hold down both mouse buttons while rebooting machine.

This presents you with a menu asking you wh graphics mode you wish to boot up in, and if y wish to use CPU cacheing – although it must be s that it doesn't work with everything.

You're quite right – software houses should more attention not only to testing there software all machines, but also clearly marking their produ for compatibility.

order one of the 4Mb memory cards presently being advertised for the A600.

To my dismay I was informed that the CDTV credit card slot only supports the small and extremely expensive personal memory cards.

Undeterred, I contacted the dealer from whom I had originally purchased the CDTV, who stated that, yes indeed, the CDTV memory card slot is a standard PCMCIA but unfortunately they could not supply me with a 4Mb card.

Several other phone calls resulted in a roughly equal split of affirmative and negative responses regarding the nature of the CDTV slot.

I therefore determined to seek the opinion of the perpetrator of this confusion, the mighty Commodore itself. After all, if anyone should know then they should.

Unfortunately I was solidly refused access to any part of the organisation other than the telephone switchboard and referred back to my dealer.

It must be said that with an attitude such as this Commodore do not deserve the loyalty which I and many others have shown in the past.

Any gripes aside, please could you resolve my problem, since £200 is a lot to spend on an ill-informed experiment.

D Madeley, Staffordshire

The answer to your question is yes, the PCM slot is identical on both the A600 and the CDTV, so the memory upgrades should work, but some software and hardware options which take advantage of the PCM slot might not.

This is because the CDTV is running under Workbench 1.3 and the A600 is a Workbench 2.0 machine, so you would have to check software available on PCM cards for compatibility with Workbench 1.3 machines.

One of the main problems with CDTV is the lack of memory. The CD drive needs quite a lot just to operate, and it may be worthwhile investing in a chip memory upgrade which will give you 2Mb of chip memory.

There are quiet a few companies offering this upgrade, called Mega-Chip. Try Alternative Image on 0533 440041.

If you're having trouble getting hold of PCM memory cards try getting in touch with either Silica on 081-309 1111 or Power Computing on 0234 843388.

Bengali Fonts

In the November issue of *Amiga Computing* I saw a letter from a reader looking for Bengali outline fonts. I am a newcomer to Amiga platform and I own an A3000.

When I was looking for Hindi outline fonts, I came to know about this company in Toronto which makes fonts in just about every Indian language for Amiga, Macintosh and PC.

They have fonts for Hindi, Bengali, Tamil, Malayalam, Thai, Sinhalese (a language of Sri Lanka) and Urdu in a variety of styles. The fonts are available in PostScript and Compugraphic formats. They can be reached at:

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V Bramendra, Toronto

Games compatibility

I have an old Amiga 500 with 1Mb of memory which I bought five years ago purely to play games on. I now have a massive collection of games – I especially enjoy role-playing adventures which I have collected quite a lot.

My machine is currently being repaired, having a new internal drive fitted, as I am told the I/O errors and crashing that kept happening when trying to resurrect characters was due to a faulty drive.

What I would like to know is, when my machine finally conks out, which computer I should be setting my sights on for games only? It must be compatible with as many of my existing games as possible.

Carmen Brule, Essex

Unfortunately you're in the same boat as a lot of people with existing software collections who want to upgrade to a better machine.

It isn't possible to move up to a new machine like the A600 or A1200 and still be able to use all of your existing software. In our tests the A600 is definitely more compatible, with around 90 per cent of existing software working fine.

The A1200, on the other hand, is only about 50 per cent compatible, but once software houses start writing games specifically for this machine it will be definitely the best upgrade choice.

Odd letters

I have an Amiga 500 Plus expanded to 2Mb, which I purchased last January from Silica. I have external floppy and I use a Philips 8833 MKII monitor and a Citizen 224 printer. I started to answer correspondence using KindWords 3 which has up to now been very good. Recently though, as I type, odd letters have been appearing in the text – "j" and "p" were the most common.

I slowed my typing speed down to ensure that I made no mistakes, but these odd insertions kept occurring.

Have you any ideas as to what the problem is? I thought maybe it was KindWords so I changed to Scribble but the same thing still happens!

D F Goodyer, Turkey

It sounds as though you have a problem with your hardware and not your software. What I would do is open up a CLI window and then start typing.

If the problem still occurs then check you keymap is set correctly in your startup-sequence. If this doesn't work, get your Amiga checked out by a reputable dealer.

Make a disk

Is the quality of your CoverDisks slipping? Or has my A500 started to go senile? On the November disk, loading Cybernetix caused the machine to crash with a guru message.

This also happened to a friend with a 1.3 machine. I expected an update to rectify this in the December issue, but as there wasn't one. Is it an isolated fault?

Also, on the December disk loading Home Accounts to the Make a Disk icon results in a message "disk is write protected", even when it isn't. Any helps?

P R Southey, Chichester

Well, first things first. Cybernetix won't run on a Plus machine unless it has fast memory as well as chip memory, but you can use a small program called degrader which is on our CoverDisk this month to rectify the problem.

As for your second problem with Home Accounts, I'm afraid your not alone. The problem lies with Workbench 2. When you click on the Make a Disk icon, your Amiga then copies all the necessary files to RAM, then instructs you to insert the disk which is to be initialised.

This is where the problem begins. Because you booted up with the CoverDisk write-protected your Amiga doesn't bother to check the drive again so it just presumes the disk is write-protected.

All you have to do is boot up with the CoverDisk write-enabled and all your problems should be over. But remember to make a back-up of the CoverDisk first.

PC compatibility

Help! I own an A500 v1.2, and was on the verge of upgrading to either an A1500/2000, or whatever might be arriving in the next month or so.

Unfortunately, I have now reached the point where I need to be able to take work home and, you guessed it, Word/DrawPerfect on the PC is the order of the day.

Lacking a bottomless wallet, the time has come where I am going to have to choose between a new Amiga and buying a PC-compatible. I'm afraid that my computing knowledge is minimal, and the idea of fighting with a bridgeboard without help is daunting.

With that in mind, do you have any reasonable suggestions about how I can stay with the Amiga, a machine for which I have a great respect having seen the PC in action, and yet be able to actually go home at night?

E S McCarney, Shropshire

I can see why you might consider buying a PC but it's not needed. If you buy say an A1200, which is able to read and write PC disks directly, then invest in WordWorth 2, you will be able to bring home documents written on a PC using WordPerfect, work on them then take them back to work. The PC at work will be able to read it back in with no problem at all.

As for importing pictures from the PC, again this is quite a simple task. Simply save your pictures on the PC in almost any format and then use a graphics converter on the Amiga.

You can get a graphics converter from most good PD libraries or if you find they don't convert as well as you want, AdPro 2 definitely will. AdPro 2 will convert virtually all formats of graphics into any graphics format you require.

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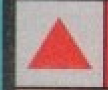
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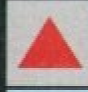
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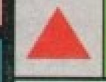
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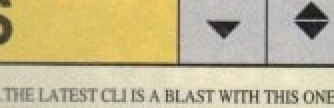
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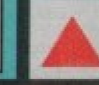
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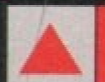
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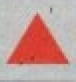
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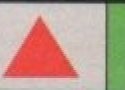
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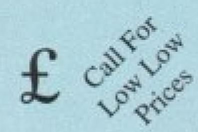
    

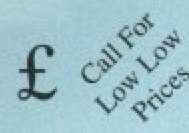
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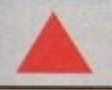
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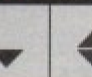
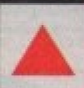
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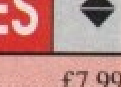
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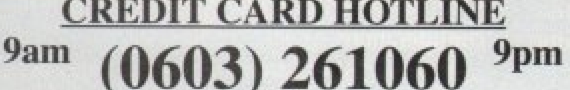


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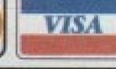
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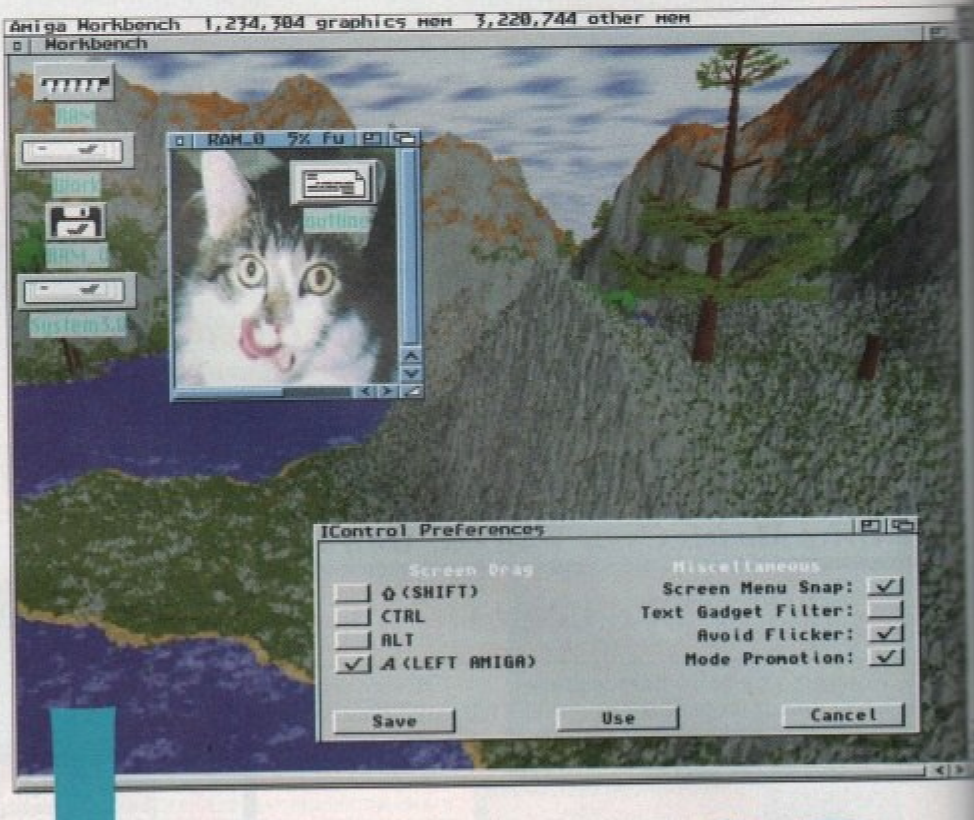
   



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The new AGA graphics chip set brings a vivid new range of colour to the Amiga line. Denny Atkin reports



True colours

Around the beginning of 1986 a group of Amiga enthusiasts met at my local computer shop and crowded around the screen of an Amiga 1000 displaying one of the first digitised 4096-colour HAM pictures.

"Amazing," one of them said, "it looks just like a TV picture." I don't know where that guy is now, but the poor fellow would have probably fainted dead on the spot if I could have shown him an AGA-mode picture that day.

Commodore's new A1200 and A4000 computers include the first truly enhanced chip set since the Amiga's introduction. The original chip set (OCS) was revolutionary for its time, with 32 and 4096-colour graphics and what was, at the time, unparalleled graphics speed.

The Enhanced Chip Set released a couple of years ago was nowhere near as innovative – it expanded the amount of memory available for graphics and let users run both PAL and NTSC software, but the new resolutions it added slowed down the machine considerably and offered a paltry four colours from a palette of 64. Amiga users were disappointed.

I've heard very few complaints about the newest Amiga chip set, though. With a range of 16 million colours, 256 or 700,000+ colours available on-screen at once, and a four-times graphics speedup, who could gripe?

Oh, sure, you say, but with those improvements it's got to break most of my software, right? Wrong! Perhaps the most amazing thing about the AGA chip set is that it's almost completely compatible with programs written for the earlier OCS and ECS chips.

The AGA chip set started life in the summer of 1990 as a project code-named Pandora. Commodore's Bob Raible was in charge of the project and designed the Lisa chip, which replaced Denise; Bill Thomas was in charge of Alice, which replaced Agnus. By the time the chipset reached prototype form it had been renamed AA (for Advanced Amiga), and was the heart of a prototype enhanced Amiga called the A3000+.

Although the A3000+ never made it past the prototype stage (about 50 machines were built for use for software and hardware development), the AA chip set was approved for a new Amiga, originally named the A3400. Designed by Dave Haynie and Greg Berlin, this system eventually evolved into the Amiga 4000 released late last year.

By the time the chip set was released in the A4000, the name was changed again, to Advanced Graphics Architecture, or AGA (there seems to be a sort of unofficial campaign going on amongst Amiga software companies and magazines to keep the AA name, but AGA is the official Commodore moniker).

Older Amigas

This chip set is standard in the new A1200 and A4000, but can't be plugged into older Amigas. One of the big advantages of AGA is its enhanced speed – in most operations it's four times faster than ECS. Unfortunately, the faster chip architecture requires much faster access to the computer's chip RAM, and there was no way to get a performance boost with AGA and remain compatible with older Amigas.

If you've got an older Amiga and want access to the new AGA modes, it's time to buy a new computer. Although it's feasible to create a replacement motherboard for the A500 and other classic Amigas with the AGA chips on it, such a board would proba-

It's the free flicker fixer!

AGA Amigas don't have de-interlacing circuitry built in like the chip in the Amiga 3000. There's no need for one, since non-interlaced equivalents of all the original resolutions exist now that colour depths have been increased in the hi-res, non-interlaced modes.

For instance, instead of opening a 640 x 512 16-colour interlaced screen, you can have the operating system open a 640 x 512 16-colour non-interlaced screen that doesn't flicker. This wasn't possible on ECS Amigas because the non-interlaced resolutions with 256 vertical lines were limited to four colours.

AGA supports two methods for opening such screens. Programs designed with AGA in mind can use the new ASL screen mode requester to allow you to select which resolution you want to run in.

If you have a monitor that will handle VGA scan rates (more on this soon), you can choose a high-res, non-interlaced mode, but if you're using a standard 1084-style monitor you might choose 640 x 256 to avoid interlace flicker.

But what about those older programs that don't know about AGA? If they open by default in annoying flickering modes, how do you tell them about the new AGA equivalents? In the IControl preferences program there's a button marked Mode Promotion. If you toggle this gadget on, most older programs that request an interlaced screen resolution will instead open on a non-interlaced screen of equivalent resolution.

So programs like PageStream, for instance, can now be opened on a 640 x 512 x 16 non-interlaced screen.

One of the other advantages of installing a de-interlacer on classic Amigas was that it got rid of those annoying scan lines between rows of pixels. If you have mode-promotion turned on, even lo-res, non-interlaced 320 x 200 screens will open on VGA scan-rate screens, free of ugly scan-lines.

A few programs, such as DeluxePaint IV and Art Department Professional, explicitly specify interlaced screens using AmigaDOS 2 calls. Such programs aren't affected by mode-promotion and will come up in flickering interlace mode even with promotion turned on, due to compatibility considerations.

However, there are a number of hacks available in the public domain, such as Steve Tibbett's DoubleX, that will force all screens to be promoted regardless of how they open their screens.

...ly cost almost as much as an A1200 to create.

So just how big an improvement is AGA? It's about as big a jump over the original Amiga graphics capabilities as those were was over IBM's four-colour CGA graphics.

The original Amiga chips had a total palette of 4,096 colours, which translates to 16 levels of each primary colour. AGA increases squares the number of colours available, offering 256 levels of each primary colour for a grand total of 16 million colours available to choose from.

And you can now get more of those colours on-screen at once as well. While the original Amiga graphics chips were limited to displaying 32 colours (not counting tricks like HalfBrite and HAM) on lo-res screens and 16 colours on hi-res screens, the AGA chips can display up to 256 colours in all resolutions.

Modifying

The real fun comes in HAM mode, though. Now that HAM has eight bitplanes to play with (thus the name HAM8 for the new mode), it can display over 262,000 colours on-screen at once. The original HAM mode created new colours by modifying 16 base colours; the new mode has 64 base colours to choose from.

This not only means you can get more colours on the screen, but it also virtually eliminates the colour fringing evident on original HAM files. Although Commodore advertises HAM8 as a 262,000 colour mode, that's not a real limitation.

With careful picking of the 64 base colours, you can actually get up to 700,000 colours in the highest resolution graphics modes!

The AGA graphics chips don't provide higher resolutions than were available with ECS, though. In fact, the available resolutions are exactly the same as on an A600 running Workbench 2.1 – 320 x 256, 640 x 256, 1,280 x 256, 800 x 300, 640 x 480, and the interlaced versions of those modes, which have double the vertical resolution.

But there's a big difference – while some of those modes were limited to 16 or even four colours with ECS, they can all display 256 colours or even HAM8 with AGA.

One thing to keep in mind, and this applies to ECS as well as AGA, is that the

With hi-res sprites you can now make that blocky arrow pointer look less clumsy

Amiga chip sets no longer have fixed built-in resolutions – they're completely programmable.

An example benefit of this programmability is the 800 x 300/600 mode added in Workbench 2.1 – Commodore added a completely new graphics mode without requiring any upgraded hardware. This means that industrious programmers will be able to create new custom screen modes.

The colour palette isn't the only thing that was improved in the AGA chip set. The sprite system has also been completely revamped. Sprites can now be up to 64 pixels wide, which means the entire screen can be covered with sprites.

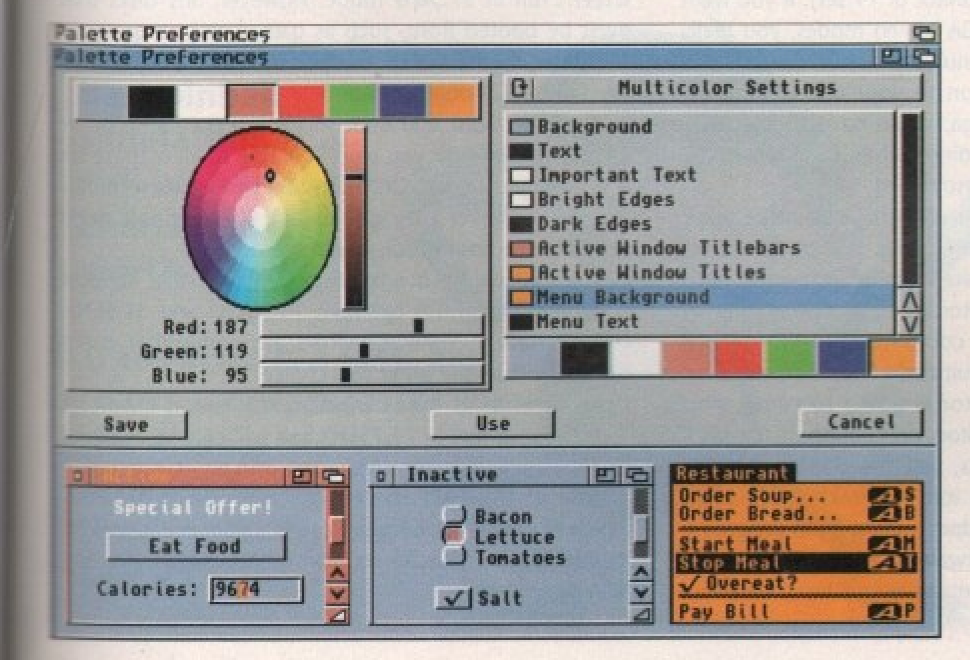
Blocky

Under OCS and ECS, sprites were always built from lo-res pixels, which made them a look rather blocky, especially on a hi-res screen. With the AGA chips sprites can now be lo-res, hi-res, or even super hi-res, no matter what resolution the screen is currently in. With hi-res sprites you can finally make that blocky arrow pointer look a lot less clunky.

Sprites can now be placed with much more precision. With previous chip sets, they only moved in lo-res pixel increments, which meant there were only 320 horizontal positions possible for a sprite.

This made precise editing on hi-res paint program screens a bit challenging sometimes. Under AGA the sprite now moves in Super hi-res pixel increments, meaning you can place the pointer with precision in any screen mode.

As mentioned earlier, the new graphics chips are much faster than the original Amiga chips. Previous chip sets talked to Chip RAM 16 bits at a time – even on the ➤



AGA screen modes and monitors

Note: *You can now do any colour depth, including 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, EHB, HAM, and HAM8, in any resolution. Note also that multiscan monitors support both VGA and 1084-style screens.*

Mode:	Resolution	Monitor type
DoubleNTSC: hi-res	640x200	VGA
DoubleNTSC: hi-res laced	640x800	VGA
DoubleNTSC: hi-res no flicker	640x400	VGA
DoubleNTSC: lo-res	320x200	VGA
DoubleNTSC: lo-res laced	320x800	VGA
DoubleNTSC: lo-res no flicker	320x400	VGA
DoublePAL: hi-res	640x256	VGA
DoublePAL: hi-res laced	640x1024	VGA
DoublePAL: hi-res no flicker	640x512	VGA
DoublePAL: lo-res	320x256	VGA
DoublePAL: lo-res laced	320x1024	VGA
DoublePAL: lo-res no flicker	320x512	VGA
Euro72	640x200	VGA
Euro36: hi-res	640x200	1084
Euro36: hi-res laced	640x400	1084
Euro36: lo-res	320x200	1084
Euro36: lo-res laced	320x400	1084
Euro36: Super hi-res	1280x200	1084
Euro36: Super hi-res laced	1280x400	1084
Euro72: Productivity	640x400	VGA
Euro72: Productivity laced	640x800	VGA
Multiscan	640x240	VGA
Multiscan: Productivity	640x480	VGA
Multiscan: Productivity laced	640x960	VGA
NTSC: hi-res	640x200	1084
NTSC: hi-res laced	640x400	1084
NTSC: lo-res	320x200	1084
NTSC: lo-res laced	320x400	1084
NTSC: Super hi-res	1280x200	1084
NTSC: Super hi-res laced	1280x400	1084
PAL: hi-res	640x256	1084
PAL: hi-res laced	640x512	1084
PAL: lo-res	320x256	1084
PAL: lo-res laced	320x512	1084
PAL: Super hi-res	1280x256	1084
PAL: Super hi-res laced	1280x512	1084
Super72	400x150	Multiscan
Super72	800x150	Multiscan
Super72: hi-res	400x300	Multiscan
Super72: hi-res laced	400x600	Multiscan
Super72: Super hi-res	800x300	Multiscan
Super72: Super hi-res laced	800x600	Multiscan
A2024: 10Hz	1024x800	A2024
A2024: 15Hz	1024x800	A2024

IControl Preferences

Screen Drag: ⇧ (SHIFT) / CTRL / ALT / ✓ A (LEFT AMIGA)

Miscellaneous: Screen Menu Snap: ✓ / Text Gadget Filter: / Avoid Flicker: / Mode Promotion: ✓

Save | Use | Cancel

➤ otherwise 32-bit Amiga 3000.

The AGA chip set gets a two-times speed increase automatically because it has a 32-bit read/write path to chip RAM, allowing it to move twice as much data every time it accesses graphics memory.

However, that's not all! Newer RAM technology lets the AGA chips do two fetches from Chip RAM in a single memory cycle. This gives you the performance of a 64-bit chip set – four times that of the original Amiga chips.

If you've ever tried to run your Workbench screen in 16-colour mode, especially with overscan, you've seen a fully-saturated chip set.

Your entire Amiga system slows down because the custom chips and processor are fighting for access to your Amiga's RAM. With AGA's 4x bandwidth the chips work so much faster that you can run in hi-res, 256-colour mode without impacting processor speed at all.

Bandwidth

Running a hi-res, 16-colour Workbench screen on an AGA Amiga actually uses up the same amount of bandwidth as a lo- res, two-colour screen does on a classic Amiga.

The new chips are so fast that, when you use the new Intuition double-buffering routines in your programs, you can actually create 60-frames-per-second animations in even the highest resolution modes, without taking over the machine!

The blitter in the AGA chips is actually the same as the ECS blitter – it's no faster at actually performing blits. However, blitter-intensive graphics can still be much faster under AGA. Since the blitter has to share the RAM bus with the CPU and video display, it operates faster now since the graphics chips take up less of the bus time.

The AGA chips are amazingly compatible with the original Amiga chips. When running programs that only support 12-bit colour values (four bits each of red, green, and blue), such as early versions of DeluxePaint, the operating system simply copies those bits into both the upper and lower 12 bits of a register, maintaining the appearance of 12-bit colour.

No problems

The vast majority of productivity programs that I've tried to run on the Amiga 4000 and 1200 have no problems with the new AGA chips or with mode promotion.

Games and especially demos are another matter, though, and many tend to flake out (non-graphic intensive games such as Sierra adventures and Maxis' Sim series work fine, though, even supporting mode promotion).

There's a solution for those programs that don't like the AGA chips. The chips can be told to turn off all the features that didn't exist in earlier versions of the chip set, thus increasing compatibility dramatically.

Simply hold down both mouse buttons when booting the computer to reach the boot menu. Click the Display Options button and you'll be given a choice not only of NTSC or PAL displays, but also of which chips you want the system to think it has – Original, Enhanced, or AGA.

Simply picking Enhanced fixes most programs (you may also want to click Boot Options and turn off the processor cache as well to increase compatibility further). Booting a game with a custom boot block automatically selects ECS mode – you have to run the 3.0 version of SetPatch in your Startup-Sequence to activate the new AGA chip set features.

Most of the programs that require you to deactivate the AGA features have problems because they break Commodore's guidelines and attack the Amiga's hardware directly, bypassing the operating system.

If these game and demo programmers want to start creating stuff that supports AGA, they're going to have to break down and finally read the manuals and learn how to do things the right way. Commodore doesn't guarantee that the next generation of Amiga graphics chips (code-name AAA) is going to be register- compatible with the AGA chips.

This means that any hackers who hit the AGA hardware directly now are going to find that their programs break on the next-generation Amigas. To keep this from happening, Commodore isn't going to document how to directly program the video hardware – they want programmers to go through the operating system.

The speedy AGA chips and the faster processors found in AGA Amigas, combined with things like Intuition double-buffered graphics support, should provide programmers with all the power they need to create fast-action simulations or dazzling demos without breaking all the rules.

Commodore's official word is that anyone who bangs the AGA hardware is going to break in the future. This means we should see a lot more games that run from the Workbench in the future, and that you should probably not get too attached to AGA-supporting games that don't wo[rk] from the Workbench.

AGA is an incredible improvement o[ver] the original Amiga chips, and the ne[w] colour depth and Super VGA-like resolut[ion] support once again puts the Amiga ahea[d] of PC clones graphically.

But Commodore's not stopping the[re]. They've announced publicly that they['re] already working on future chip sets that wi[ll] enhanced sound (one area untouched [by] the AGA chips), provide true 24-bit graph[ics], and speed the Amiga's graphics by ye[t] another magnitude.

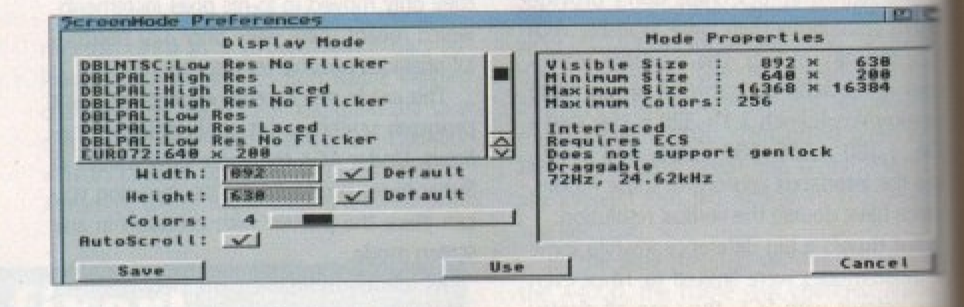
Thinking of something more impressi[ve] than AGA is mind-boggling, though. [If] you've go to your dealer to sneak a peek a[t] the new A1200's AGA graphics, you'd be[t]ter leave your credit cards at home, or yo[u] may find yourself having to explain wh[y] your Amiga 500 has suddenly bee[n] replaced...

AC

AGA-supporting software

Currently shipping at press-time: A[rt] Department Professional, ASD[G] CineMorph, GVP DeluxePaint IV AG[A], Electronics Arts Final Copy II, SoftWoo[d] ImageFX, GVP ImageMaster, Black Be[lt] Systems Morph Plus, ASDG ProWrite 3.3, New Horizons

Shipping soon: AmigaVision Professional, Commodore Brilliance, Digital Creations Caligari 24, Octre[e] Imagine, Impulse Professional Page 4.0, Gold Disk Vista Pro 3.0, VRLI



Choosing the right monitor

The AGA chip set gains its resolution flexibility because it has programmable scan rates. However, to take advantage of the chip set's flexibility, you'll need a flexible monitor.

Unfortunately, you'll actually need a monitor more flexible than the vast majority of those on the market. The original Amiga chip set output at a horizontal scan rate of 15.75kHz, and this is the rate supported by the original Amiga monitors such as the 1084.

This scan rate supports resolutions up to 640 x 256 non-interlaced, and 640 x 512 interlaced (more with overscan). The new hi-res, non-interlaced modes added with ECS require a monitor that scans at the VGA scan rate of 31.5kHz.

The Amiga 3000's deinterlacer circuitry and add-on flicker fixers also require a 31.5kHz monitor.

You have three monitor choices with an AGA Amiga – a 1084-style 15.75kHz monitor, a VGA 31.5kHz monitor, or a multiscan monitor that supports horizontal scan rates ranging from 15.75kHz to 31.5kHz (A1200 users can also use a composite monitor or TV set). If you want to be able to use all the AGA screen modes, you really only have one choice – the multiscan.

If you choose to hang on to your old 1084 when upgrading to an AGA Amiga, you'll have access to all the new colour modes including HAM8, but none of the new hi-res, non-interlaced resolutions.

You'll still be much better off with AGA, since you'll get the faster screen updates and the new colour modes (television sets and composite monitors offer the same modes as a 1084-style monitor, albeit in a much blurrier form. Still, the colour PAL composite output is much sharper than on an A520-equipped A500).

Using a VGA-only monitor is going to cause most users problems. These monitors don't support the standard old Amiga resolutions, just the double-scanned 31.5kHz modes. If you run mostly Workbench-launchable programs, such as wordprocessors, paint programs, and desktop publishing software, you'll be OK because you can turn on mod-promotion and have all those screens run in 31.5kHz mode. However, any disks that must be booted from, such as games, will come up in 15.75kHz mode, which will just look like a scrambled mess on a VGA-only monitor.

Also, the Guru and Boot Mode screens come up in 15.75kHz mode, so you won't be able to view these on a VGA-only monitor. Only consider one of these monitors if you never play games and if you don't need access to the Boot Mode screen.

The best choice is a multiscan monitor that support horizontal scan rates between 15.75kHz and 31.5kHz. Unfortunately, such monitors are somewhat more expensive than the other two choices.

Be careful, as many modern multiscan monitors won't sync as low as 15.75kHz and will only be as useful as a VGA-only monitor when used with an AGA Amiga.

One of the best choices is Commodore's 1960, which of course supports all the Amiga scan rates. With a wide-range multiscan you can access every mode the AGA Amiga offers.

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To help users get off to a good start, Silica give their fabulous Zool pack away free of charge with all Amigas. If you missed out on this when you bought your Amiga, now's your chance to catch up.

All you have to do is answer the question on the entry form below and send it to

Amiga Computing Silica Competition,
Europress Direct, PO Box 2,
Ellesmere Port L65 3EA,

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ENTRY FORM

Name ______________________________

Address ______________________________

____

Postcode ______________ Daytime Telephone ______________

Answer this question!
What do Silica give away a Zool Pack with?

____

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Send to: Amiga Computing Silica Competition, Europress Direct,PO Box 2, Ellesmere Port L65 3EA.

Please tick this box if you do not wish to receive promotional material from other companies ☐

AMIGA Update

The first AGA-capable paint package is at last available in the shape of an updated DPaint 4.1. Stevie Kennedy samples its wares

HAM has always been a troublesome medium in which to work. Though capable of impressive effects and colourful static graphics, it was always a non-starter for games purposes, and less than useful even for most animations.

Graphics produced in Hold And Modify mode suffered from much larger file sizes than their 32-colour or Halfbrite (64-colour) cousins, and in addition there was the dreaded HAM "fringing".

This effect, which crops up when HAM pictures are being created by hand or edited, rather than rendered direct from a ray tracing package, is the inevitable result of the compromise which lies at the heart of HAM.

Of the 6-bits which make up every HAM pixel, only four are used for colour data. The other two are used to calculate screen colours by modifying one colour in respect to the others around it.

In arithmetical terms, four bits give 16 true colours, but the extra two bits lead to this figure being multiplied by 16 twice (because the older chips are 16-bit chips), and 16 x 16 x 16 is 4,096.

Subsequent faffing about on-screen can often lead to rather inappropriate colours being selected, and when screen values are disturbed, such as when the user cuts and pastes a brush, so much messing about with colours goes on that the poor old 6-bit HAM standard can't cope. Fringing is the result, and a messy result it is too.

With the new HAM8, or 8-bit HAM, many users might be bewildered as to how so many extra colours can come from just two extra bits.

The answer is that the colour data is now made up of six bits with the usual two added on for screen colour calculations, and as the graphics chips are now 32-bit, each of the two modify bits can modify a pixel 32 times over.

True 6-bit colour leads to 256 colours, and if you multiply this figure twice by 32, you get 256 x 32 x 32 – 262,144 colours in HAM8. Fringing is still a problem with HAM8, but as there are now so many more colours and as the mode can be displayed in much higher resolutions, the fringing which does develop is much less obvious than with HAM6.

In addition, the AGA Lisa and Alice chips (best thought of as replacements for Denise and Agnus respectively) do their best to minimise the damage. Result? Stunning, near-24-bit quality static graphics, ample testament to which you can find in the screenshots on these pages.

Problem? We're still dealing with HAM, even if in a much improved set of clothes. Early reports from excited developers working on the new machines indicated that HAM8 suffered from no fringing and all sorts of wild claims were made as to the A4000's animation capabilities.

Until the release of DPaint 4 AGA, however, there was no way to judge how accurate such claims were, as no paint package or animation creator existed which made use of the new chips. We now have a real world benchmark with which to put the AGA protégés through their paces.

DPaint 4 AGA is new in only a few respects. Virtually nothing has been changed over v4.1, and more or less the only new features are related to support for Kickstart 3.0 and the AGA chip set, but this in itself is enough to warrant a very close inspection.

When run, the package immediately shows its Kickstart 3.0 origins by offering the user a number of display modes – 30 in total – ranging from olde worlde lo-res, hi-res, and hi-res interlace, to AA HAM, Productivity, and Super hi-res.

Workbench 3.0's attention to detail means that advanced information on pixel speeds, scan rates, and so on is available for each mode before the user makes his or her choice, enabling selection of the best mode for any particular setup.

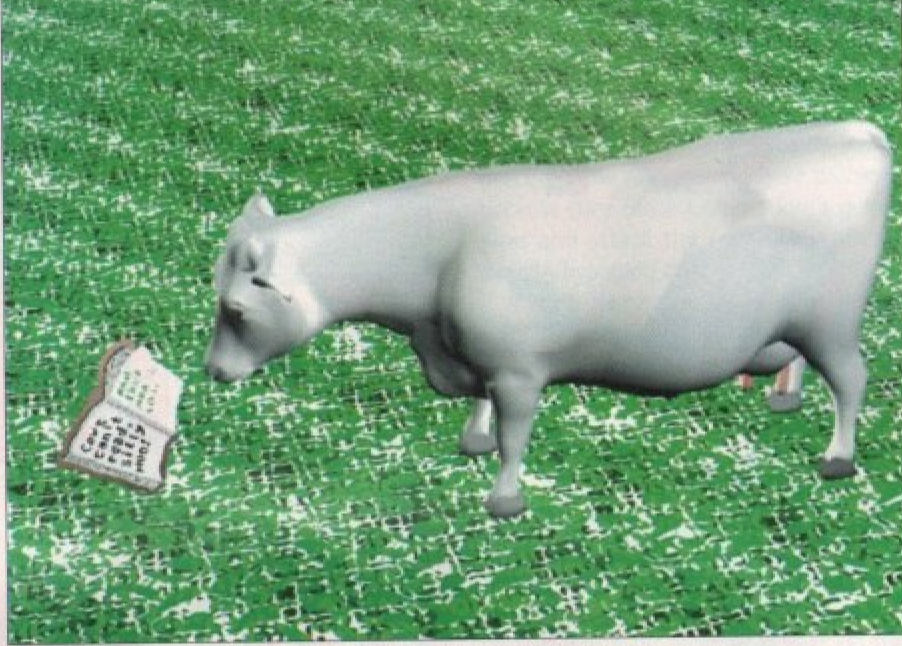
Those using standard medium resolution monitors will be restricted in their choices, as will those using cheap, single scan rate VGA monitors.

The former will not be able to use modes which scan at frequencies of more than 15.5KHz, and the latter will more than likely be stuck with VGA mode.

Ideally, good multiscan monitors, such as the better PC models (I've used an AOC 14in with no trouble) or the Commodore 1950/60 range should be used with AGA machines if the best display results are required.

Though on the whole silent on this matter, Commodore will sooner or later have to admit that improved machines require improved and more advanced peripherals, and the 1084S/Philips 8833 monitors so prevalent in today's Amiga market are not up to scratch as far as the A1200/A4000 range is concerned.

Once a display mode is chosen, the familiar DPaint 4 interface pops up and

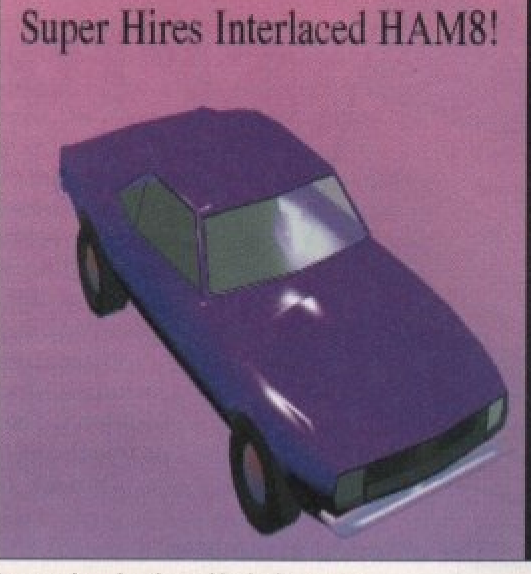


Users can now touch up 24-bit rendered graphics on a standard Amiga

HAM8 is superb for presentation graphics

Fringeing is a problem with HAM8 images...

256 colour gradients are passable, but less than perfect



Camaro created in Imagine 2.0, then imported fo the addition of titles and other graphics. Nice,

Imported rendered graphics look stunning

exploration of the colour capabilities of the new Amigas can begin. Let's start with static graphics.

Apart from AA Halfbrite mode, which offers the usual 64 colours, though from a palette of 16.7 million, all modes offer at least 256 colours.

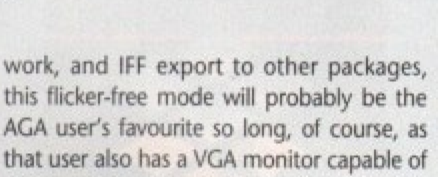
Productivity modes (referred to as Multiscan in accordance with Workbench 3.0 monitor drivers), handles up to 256 colours, and AA-HAM+ offers 262,144 from a palette of the same size.

PAL mode, the only display mode to directly support genlocking, has a similar spread of colour and resolution options, from lo-res HAM8 to Super hi-res (1280 x 512) in 256 colours.

Excellent

Static screen images generated in PAL hi-res laced 256 colours are of excellent quality, and for many purposes far more useful than HAM8. They don't suffer from fringing, animate faster, and can be used directly with a genlock.

However, for static computer art, HAM8, especially in Productivity mode, is hard to beat. In this mode, a respectable 640 x 480 screen resolution results in almost square pixels, and HAM8 makes full screen gradient fills possible without noticeable stepping. For presentation graphics, art-



work, and IFF export to other packages, this flicker-free mode will probably be the AGA user's favourite so long, of course, as that user also has a VGA monitor capable of displaying it.

The only blot on HAM8's copy book is fringing, a problem which becomes acute once a lot of detail is present on-screen. For example, it is virtually impossible to type text across a HAM8 screen, never mind a HAM8 screen which has been treated to a gradient fill. Fringing in these circumstances destroys image quality.

Though a problem associated with the HAM8 compromise rather than DPaint 4 AGA, the extent of fringing was a disappointment to everyone in the office, a sentiment which will surely be echoed by many future AGA users.

Not all is gloom, as there are ways to partially avoid fringing, but initial impressions are that HAM8 will remain, as HAM6, a mode most usefully employed by packages which render directly to it, such as ray tracers.

To give fringing a body swerve, I tried a text logo over a very gradual fading background from green to blue. The logo, utilising a red to yellow fill, could not be stamped down on the background without slight fringes developing, but it was at least a major improvement on direct typing to



...but can be cut down in certain circumstances

screen. With a black background to the logo itself, the situation improved dramatically.

By progressively reducing the logo's black background until it was no more than a keyline, I found it possible to produce perfectly good presentation graphics with fewer HAM8 headaches, but the problem never quite goes away unless the text is surrounded by a straight-edged solid box.

Rounded outlines, such as are unavoidable with most fonts, cause greater fringing than straight edges.

Laborious

DPaint's spare page comes in very handy for such work, as it enables the user to create and cut out text in a clean environment before swapping over to the main graphic for final positioning. The process is a painfully slow and sometimes laborious one, but is capable of good results.

Animated graphics using the new AGA screen modes have caused probably the most intense speculation since the A4000 was launched. Initial reports from the Pasadena show of a full colour Sentinel animation running at 60 frames per second in NTSC interlace caused heightened expectations of full screen, full motion 24-bit movie work on a standard machine.

While I wouldn't like to completely deflate these expectations, I have to at least put a dent in them, if only as far as DPaint's animation capabilities are concerned.

In anything other than lo-res Productivity mode (320 x 480), large animations are either too slow or not of sufficient quality to be used in professional video productions.

Beautiful

In hi-res PAL interlace using overscan, which is the standard video mode (remember that VGA and Productivity do not support genlocking), DPaint 4 AA can churn out beautiful images, but can only animate them in a jerky and less than useful fashion.

Having seen Scala run DPaint-produced HAM8 animations smoother and quicker, the suspicion that it is the software which is at fault rather than the hardware is a hard one to avoid.

Smaller animations in 256-colour full video spec (hi-res overscan) are possible, and animate smoothly on the A4000, but try to use half screen or larger animations and smoothness quickly falls off.

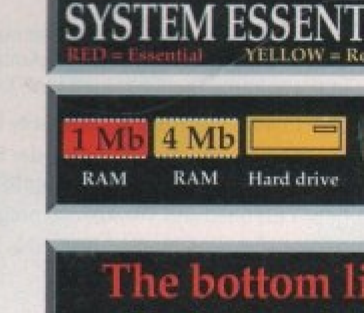
Against a black background, larger text logo animations, scrolls, and so on are excellent, so DPaint 4 AGA should suffice for high quality video titling, but video quality computer movies are, as many cynics suspected, out of the question without the use of single frame video recorders.

What can be achieved with this package far outdoes any previously available paint/animate program, though to be fair to manufacturers currently developing competition for DPaint 4 AGA, the new chips and video modes are a major factor in this.

Full screen 256 animations, superb HAM8 titling complete with colour gradiated text, and static images only the better 24-bit boards can better make painting and animating in AGA supremely pleasurable.

However, given an A1200 rather than an A4000, less than about 4Mb RAM, and a hard drive of less than 40Mb in capacity, much of this potential will never be realised.

A1200 owners who have read the inflated claims made by some companies and the odd press report should be prepared for disappointment if they are not ready, or cannot afford, to purchase the power peripherals to go with their power Amigas. AC



The bottom line
Supplier: Electronic Arts
Phone: 0753 549442
Price: £99.99
Available mid-January



The Mac-like features, but they're rather slow

Digital doodles

Ben Styles looks at the VIDI Amiga 12 digitiser

I've always liked the idea of digitisers. It is so rewarding when you eventually grab a brilliant image and spend hours fiddling with it, and it's always nice when you have the equipment that will do the job with the least hassle.

VIDI Amiga is one such piece of equipment. It's relatively simple to use and it won't cost you an arm and a leg.

To look at, it's a bit of an uninteresting piece of kit. In the box you get the disks, a phono-to-phono cable and an anonymous little box that plugs into your parallel port.

The first thing to do was to set the thing up. I'm not an expert with complicated wiring jobs. The machine I used was an A4000 so I could get the most out of the software to begin with.

The box plugged straight into the parallel port and the lead that comes out of the box goes into the floppy disk port.

It's a bit ungainly, the box, so your should make sure you have a lot of room at the back of your machine before you start fiddling.

I then took the phono-to-phono lead and plugged it into the Video Out slot on the video. When using digitisers I always find it helpful to have another monitor set up to see what the image will look like on-screen before you actual take a grab. However, unlike most other digitisers, VIDI Amiga 12 doesn't require a second monitor, and displays all its images on one screen.

For maximum flexibility, though, I plugged another monitor into the back of the video as you would for usual domestic use – this way I had the Amiga Workbench showing and the direct signal from the video going into the TV. If you're a bit confused, refer to the diagram.

I must stress now that the VIDI's physical shape makes using it with A1500/2000 machines impossible unless a ribbon cable is used to connect the digitiser casing to the parallel port. This is little more than a minor hassle, but I was surprised not to find one in the box, though Rombo will supply the cables on request and they are a doddle to construct at home.

The next task was the software. Usually I would recommend that large commercial packages like this be installed onto the hard drive if you have one, but in this case it doesn't seem to matter.

There is only the one disk supplied in the package so you don't have to do any disk swapping, thus it's not essential to install it to hard disk. On booting up the program you are faced with a main screen where you can set the preferences of the grabbing and the viewing of the image and another menu which lets you enter the editing carousel and grab options.

The grabbing screen is a relatively friendly environment. The top half of the screen is taken up by the image window. In the window you see the image which the video source is producing. Colour grabs are taken in about a second, and mono grabs in real time. Along the bottom of the screen are the grab options.

These range from HAM and HAM-E to mono images. It also supports the 256-colour format which will please the prospective A1200 buyers out there.

If you grab an image the machine will tell you what you have grabbed by ticking the RGB and MONO boxes and the respective separations.

Viewing

To view the images you just click on view but the machine must first mix the RGB together. How fast it will do this depends on the processor in your machine – in the 4000 it took only a couple of seconds because of the 040 processor but even when I tried it on the A500 it still wasn't that slow – 30 seconds at most for a complicated image.

So you have your image saved and you're pleased with it – now what can you do? Flip back to the main screen along with the preferences and you'll find an editing option.

When selected this screen opens out into a full editing screen which lets you run the image through filters. There are various options, some of which let you really ring the changes, such as the psychedelic filters.

To be fair, the filters are very well done and don't detract from the image's original clarity unless you are selecting a soft filter to put over your image.

Improvements

I was impressed most by the negative filter which gives a really clean negative image. The editing booth also has image improvement options like find edges, image blur and image sharpen. On top of the usual filters you can flip the image on its X and Y axes and cut and paste sections of the image.

If you have plenty of memory you can use the Carousel option which allows you to show all of the pictures that you have stored up during you grabbing session.

It's also possible to grab several frames from the video image, store them into memory, mess about with them by pulling them off the carousel then playing them back as an animation.

You would need a pretty awesome amount of memory to do this with full size colour or mono images, but the end result would be well worthwhile.

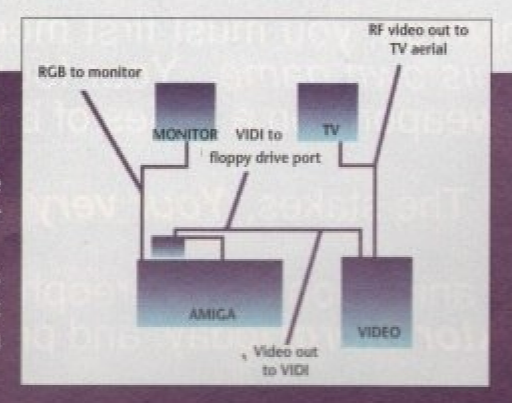
I liked VIDI Amiga 12 because of its simplicity. Setting the equipment up in the first place is always a bit of a struggle but once it's there you can forget about it. I found that it didn't interfere with any other programs I was using, and was overall a very well behaved piece of equipment.

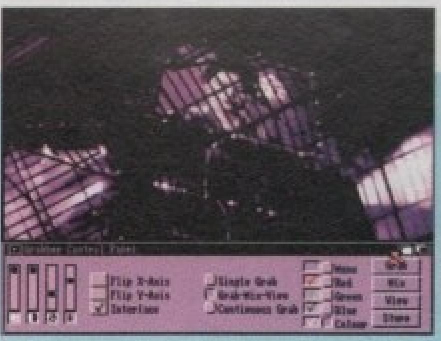
AC

Totally wired

This diagram is designed to make the wiring of these image grabber boxes a little simpler.

Remember – the seperate TV is not necessary to use Vidi 12, but it will make life easier when grabbing in colour

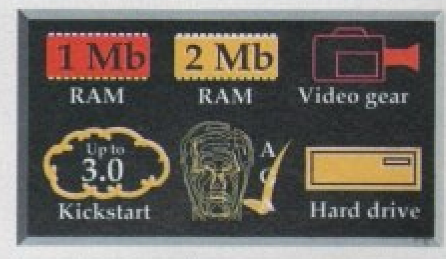




The grabbing screen with the image updates



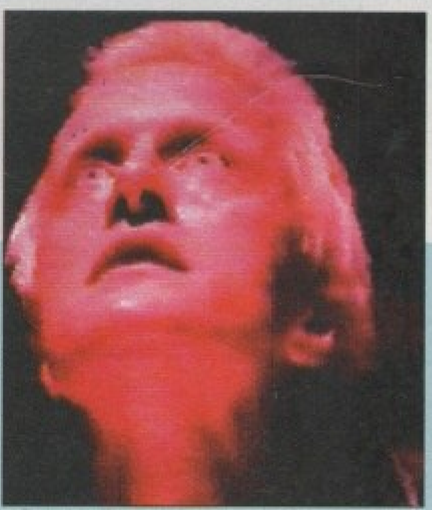
The main screen with a preview of the image



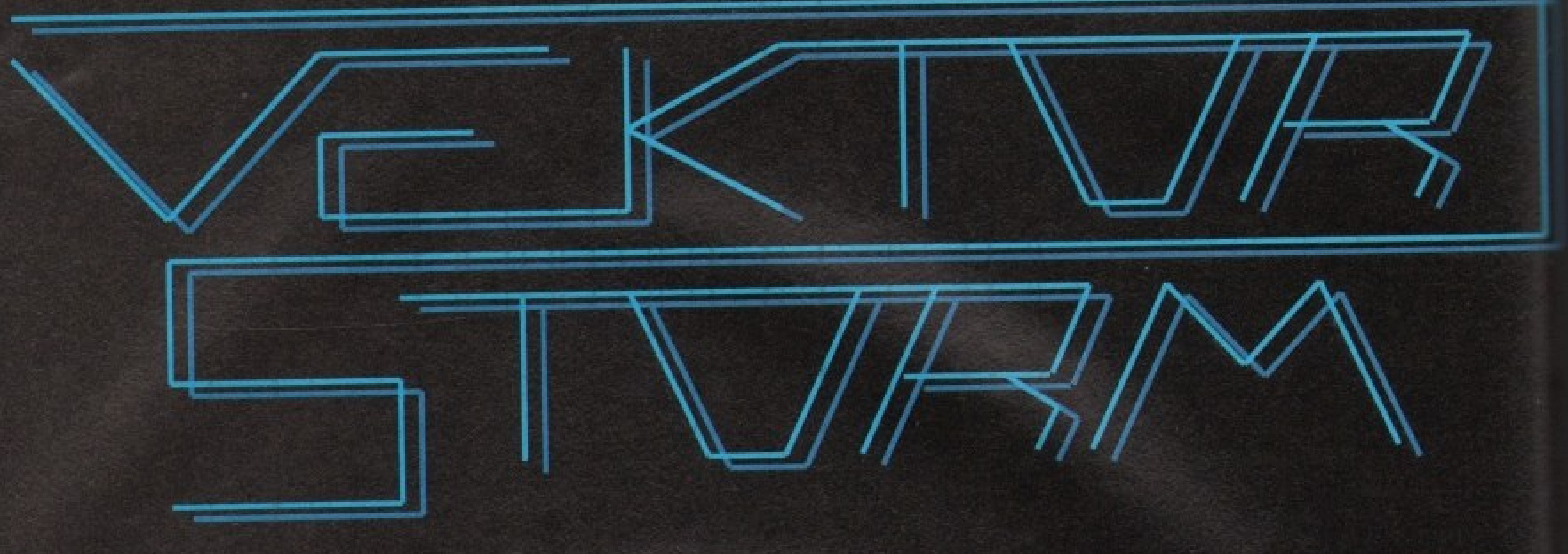
The bottom line

VidiAmiga is one of the highest quality digitisers on ther market giving a high standard of picture quality at a good price.

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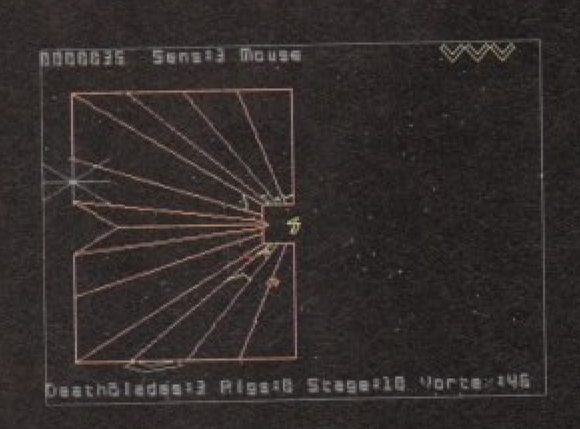
I'm sure he liked it

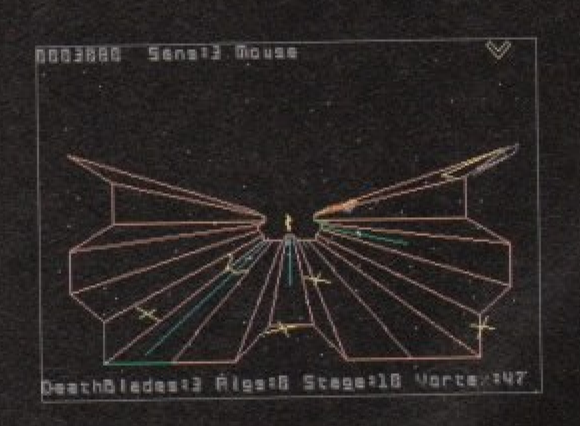


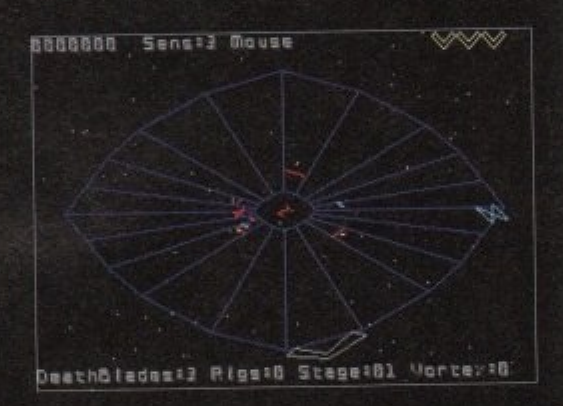
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Minimum System Requirements:
512K RAM With Kickstart Version 1.3 or Higher.



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Rainbow revolution



Images with fewer colours make the best subjects

High quality and original colour prints scan in beautifully...

Stevie Kennedy finds a hand scanner to make even Mr Major lose his greyscales

The PowerScan mono scanner, reviewed in *AC* several months ago, set a new standard in affordable mono hand scanning that most other manufacturers have been chasing ever since.

With PowerScan Professional v3, the ante has, as they say, been upped, and upped right into the colour spectrum to the tune of 4,096 wonderful hues.

Consisting of a standard scanning head, connecting cable, and interface with the usual disk-based software, ColourScan looks like nothing other than a straightforward 64-greyscale mono scanner of the type so many budget DTP enthusiasts have grown to know and love.

Give ColourScan one run over a colour image, however, and the user's old faithful mono matey will find itself permanently re-housed on the dustiest and least accessible shelf. The image quality one can wrest from Power's latest release is stunning.

Unshaking

ColourScan works in the same way as all hand scanners in that the user must employ an unshaking hand to drag the scanning head over the target picture at a steady rate.

The image is imported using a fairly normal-looking 105mm scanning head, but instead of being stored as a 64-colour image it is internally buffered by the ColourScan software as 12-bit data in 4,096 true colours.

As opposed to HAM (hold and modify), 12-bit true colour does not suffer from fringing, nor does it do strange things when scaled or ported to another screen resolution. This enables ColourScan's software to convert and save an image as a 24-bit IFF, TIFF, or 256-colour GIF.

Before saving, however, the by now standard array of editing options can be applied. PowerScan Professional has a wide range of polygon and freehand drawing tools with which users can touch up or enhance the scanned image, and though these are tricky to use on a rough HAM representation such as displayed after a scan, they add to the package's flexibility.

Much more useful are the image processing tools, including flip, rotate, scale, and crop, the latter two of which will be essential for floppy drive systems. Images scanned in colour can result in IFF file sizes of over 1Mb, especially if saved as 24-bit files.

Again, cropping is a vital tool for scanned images, most of which will contain data which is not required. Most users will find it impossible to set up the scanning area so that only the required image is scanned, but with the crop tool any extraneous data can be thrown away, saving time and disk space.

Other more advanced tools include skew, capable of pseudo-perspective effects, lighten and darken, which can be particularly handy for murky or over-exposed scans, and clean up, which is unfortunately almost useless on colour scans as it tends to turn them into impressionist paintings rather than sharper images.

In total, PowerScan's image retouching skills match those of most other scanning packages, but the ambitious user will, as usual, require AdPro or ImageFX to really zap up those imported artworks.

In hardware terms, the scanner will be familiar to anyone used to the older mono units, with selection sliders for dot sizes and resolutions giving a possible spread of between 50 and 400dpi in mono mode, or 50 to 200dpi in full colour.

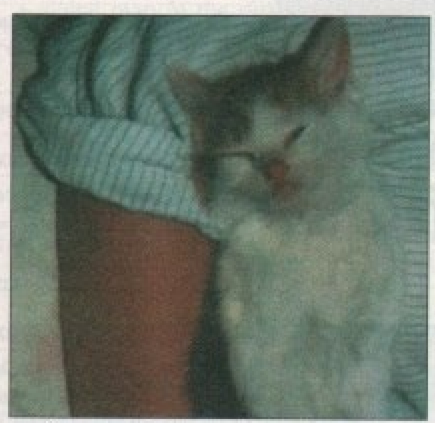
Reflections

In addition, a handy brightness thumb control makes it possible to have a stab at photographs with less than ideal exposure, though at the highest levels there is a tendency for the surface reflections from glossy photos to white out the picture detail rather than enhance it.

In shape and size, the scanning unit is just the right side of comfortable, and heavy enough that it feels substantial in use. Smooth scans are facilitated by the design of the unit's underside which, unlike some hand scanners I've seen, is clear of obstructions.

The roller, so important for good results, seems well mounted and doesn't protrude too far from the surface. On some scanners, badly designed rollers which either don't roll smoothly enough or stick out too far can lead to see-saw scanning, but ColourScan suffers from none of this.

Overall, there is little on which to fault ColourScan. The software could be faster and the A2000 Zorro card interface a little more robust, but other than these minor niggles, the only thing one can say about Power's new colour baby is that it does the job, gets results, and the results are excellent. AC


...and even murky domestic snaps con look OK

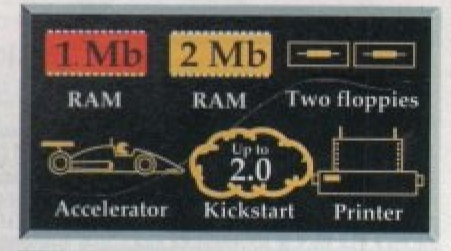
The competition

Er ... there isn't any. This is the first product of its kind on the Amiga, and the next step up is the 18-bit semi-flatbed Sharp JX100, costing £600 or more.

This scanner produces better results than ColourScan, but although in 18-bit rather than 12-bit, JX100 scans are taken in the same 200dpi resolution. The result is that when scanning colour line art, or any colour illustration which is not full colour, the user would be hard pressed to spot the difference.

When full colour photographs are scanned, the JX100 shows its superiority, but again the differences are not as obvious as one would expect from a scanner costing more than twice as much.





The bottom line

Ease-of-Use 8/10
Implementation 9/10
Value-for-money 8/10
Overall 9/10

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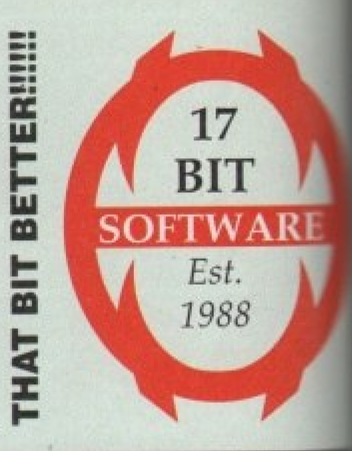
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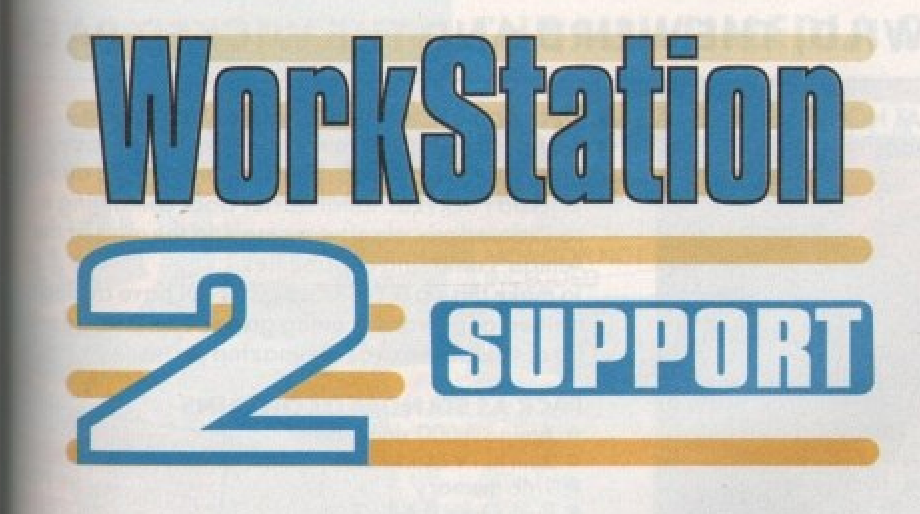
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As more readers begin to sample the delights of WorkStation 2, we examine more of its capabilities and sort out a minor problem

WorkStation 2 was designed with the A500 Plus in mind to take advantage of Kickstart 2.04 and the more advanced Workbench interface it offered. However, since the original design of the disk, Commodore have released the A600 and A1200, and this has brought on one small problem.

The A600 has no internal battery backed-up clock, which means that when a WorkStation 2 disk boots up, the startup-sequence fails at the command:

```
SETCLOCK LOAD
```

in trying to load the time from a non-existent clock (on unexpanded machines), an error code of 20 is returned and everything grinds to a halt.

The solution is a simple matter of editing the startup-sequence using QED and inserting the line:

```
FAILAT 21
```

before the Setclock command.

This effectively tells the Amiga not to bother with commands which fail for simple reasons. When the revised startup-sequence runs on boot-up, the user will see the message:

```
BATTERY BACKED-UP CLOCK NOT FOUND
```

and startup will continue as normal.

My thanks to Mr T Gigg of Bristol for writing in with this enquiry. All future WorkStation 2 disks will be dispatched with this bug fixed, but any users of unexpanded A600 machines with first issue disks can either carry out the modification outlined above or return their disks to Europress Direct for a replacement.

Keep those letters rolling in, folks. As you can see, they are all examined for possible problems or support issues and any bugs or suggestions passed on through this column.

On with the support column. Mr T French of Anglesey was confused by FixDisk. He managed to operate it to check his WorkStation 2 disk, but writes: "There are so many buttons, I'm beginning to wonder what happens when I press the wrong one!"

FixDisk is a disk retrieval system designed to cure some of the many problems which crop up on floppy disks, including read/write errors, corrupted files, and the odd validation problem. As the latter will be more common, we'll look first at how FixDisk can be used to remedy it.

Validation errors crop up when the "bitmap" is corrupt. Basically, a bitmap is a digital map of the disk's contents and where on the disk they can be found. Any disparity between the bitmap and the structure found by AmigaDOS when it examines a disk will cause the Amiga to look for the disk-validator file.

Disk-validator, built in to the Kickstart 2/3 ROM, can correct minor problems, but will give up on major messes. FixDisk, however, will not. To fix an unvalidated disk, load FixDisk, then click on the Directory gadget at the top of its window. There's no need to scan the whole disk for bitmap errors, as FixDisk need merely ascertain where everything is located.

Faulty

Next, click on the drive containing the faulty disk and click Disk Inserted when prompted. FixDisk will now slog its way through the directory structure, checking every file's exact location, then compare this to the bitmap. If the bitmap is incorrect, FixDisk says so and asks for permission to re-write it.

Once the go ahead is give, the program takes only a few seconds to rectify the fault and the disk will be back to normal. For more serious faults, such as read/write errors, the complete disk scan will be needed.

If, for example, the Amiga complains that a disk has a read error or a write error on block so-and-so, you will find that under normal circumstances the disk is rendered useless. Using FixDisk, however, some of the damage can be repaired.

Repeat the procedure for the bitmap error, but this time click on the All button, which prompts FixDisk to trawl through the disk examining each and every file in turn until it finds a corrupt or damaged part of the disk. When this happens, a number of options will be available.

Many of these are best presented to coders and system experts, but most of us can expect at least to be able to attempt a save.

Let's say the program tells you that there is a read error on block 1605, which happens to be cylinder 72, head 1, sector 10. The error is a bad sector checksum (BadSecSum), which means that FixDisk cannot match the corrupt contents of the block to the "checksum" which is used as a method for making sure none of the data has been messed up.

At this point, the temptation would be to scream in confusion and despair, but the canny user will click Retry, the Ignore if the fault recurs, then wait until the scan is complete. The next step is vital.

In the window to the left will be a list of the disk's contents complete with the disk block where the file header is located. To attempt to rescue data from a damaged block, select the file containing the damaged block, then click on Selected below the Check Files option.

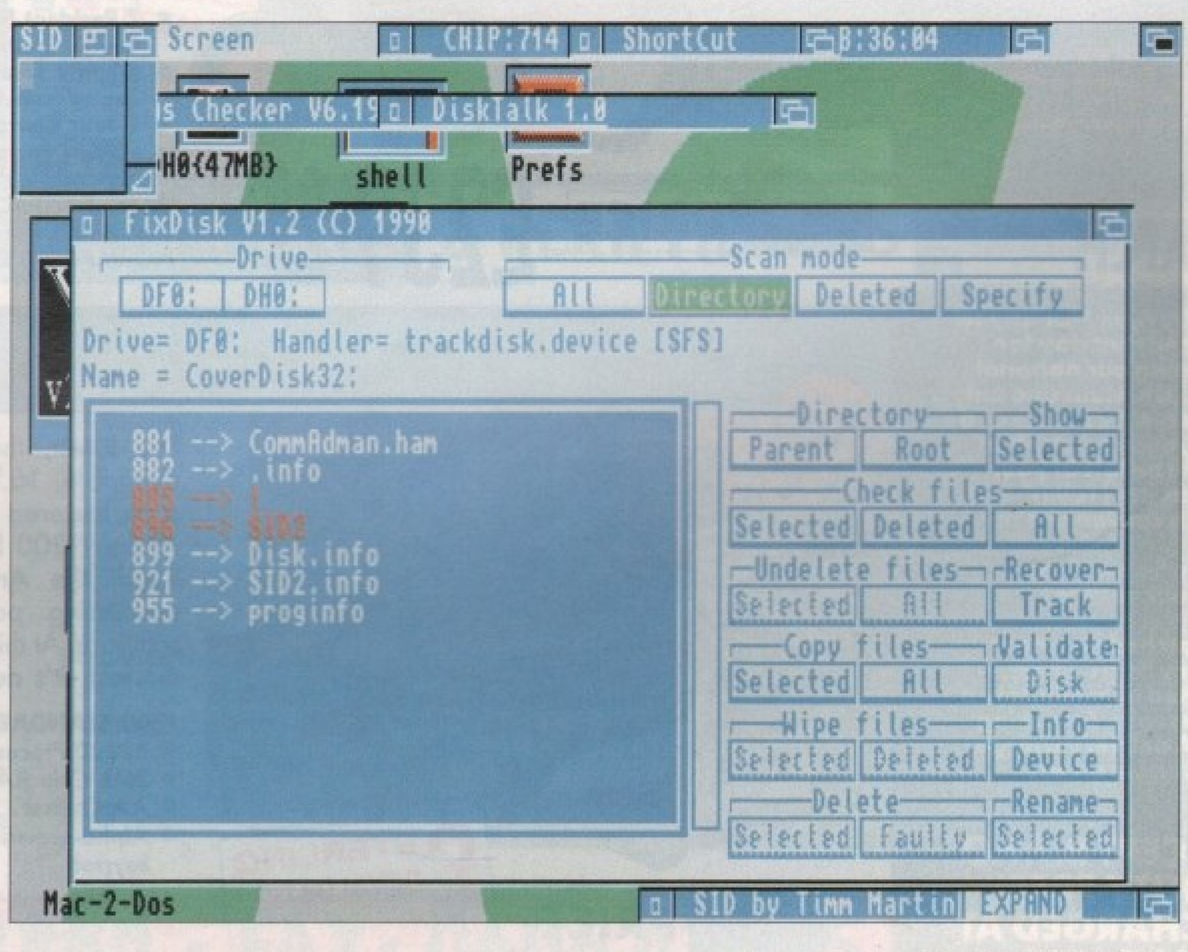
When the error is encountered, you can attempt to save the damaged part to another disk or the RAM disk, write over the block and destroy the original data, or keep on trying. While it may sometimes be possible to save the damaged data, some errors are too serious to remedy.

Crippling

In this case, writing over the block may be the only option which, though erasing some of the data and possibly crippling a program file for good, will at least allow the rest of the disk to operate without those annoying read/write errors.

If a damaged file is a data file, you may be able to save at least part of it, which is a lot better than nothing at all.

For now, that's all we'll cover on FixDisk. If enough enquiries come in from WorkStation 2 readers, we'll attempt to cover the more complex aspects of the program and look in more depth at its operation, but until then your manual should contain enough information to allow you to usefully employ its talents. AC



FixDisk can appear daunting, but perseverance pays off with this excellent disk retrieval program



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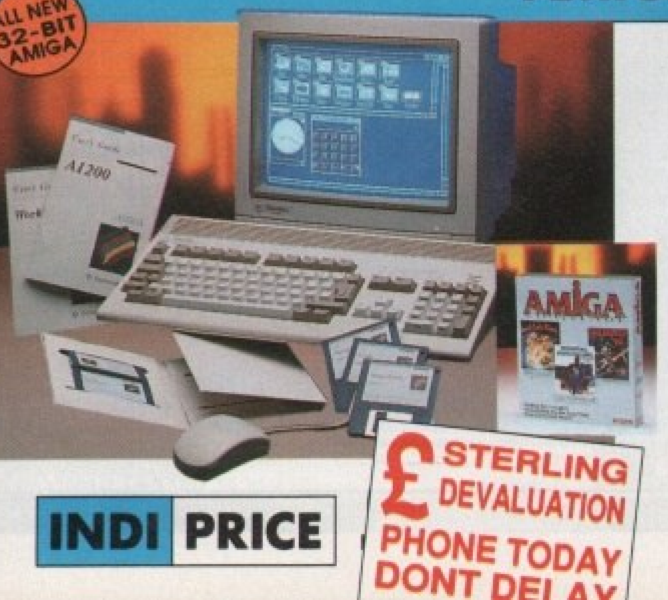
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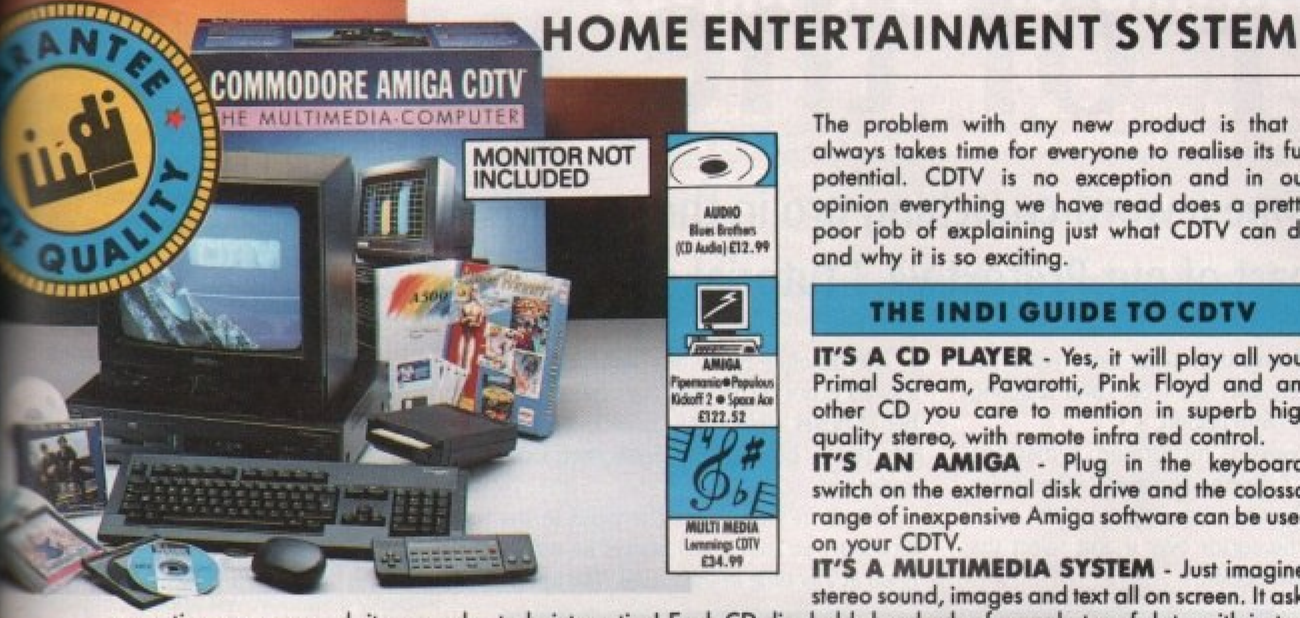
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THE INDI GUIDE TO CDTV

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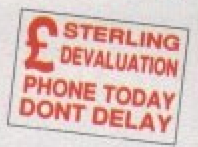
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Power of the press

Become a word-crunching pro in the second part of our Protext v4.3 tutorial guide

Last month we gave away Protext v4.3 from Arnor on our cover. We also included a brief beginners' guide on how to create documents, move them around , and save them. Well now you have had time to familiarise yourself with Protext's layout, it's time to look at some of the more powerful features this version of Protext has to offer.

One of the most important tasks before printing a document is to spell check it. Spell checking is very quick with Protext and well worth doing even if you are generally good at spelling, as many typing mistakes can also be picked up in this way.

Checking while typing is most convenient when used with a hard disk, or when the dictionaries are loaded into a RAM disk so that they may be accessed almost instantly. This option may be toggled on and off using the Typing Check option in the Option menu, whenever you want.

If this option is turned on, every time you type an unrecognised word Protext beeps to indicate the fact, allowing you to backspace and correct the word.

The other spelling checker options are accessed through the Spell menu which also has options to carry out maintenance on dictionaries and to use special commands to search for words in dictionaries, find anagrams and so on.

Apart from checking while typing, Protext provides four other ways to check spelling. Individual words may be checked by positioning the cursor on a word (or immediately after the word) and selecting the Single Word option.

If the word is recognised, a message saying so is briefly displayed, otherwise a dialogue box appears. Type in "teh" now, position the cursor over it and select the Single Word option.

The dialogue box which appears when a word is not recognised contains a number of boxes which may be clicked on, or selected by pressing the highlighted letter in the box.

The Store box stores the word in the dictionary so that it will always be recognised at any time in the future. The Ignore box causes the word to be ignored for the remainder of the time that document is being edited.

The Skip box ignores that word for the current time only. Change returns you to edit mode to make whatever changes are necessary to correct the spelling.

If you don't know what the correct spelling is, Protext may be able to help you by displaying one or more words which it thinks you intended to use. This is done by selecting the Lookup option.

Select the Lookup option and almost instantly a window will appear containing a list of words. Select the word you want by double clicking on it and it will replace the mis-spelled word in the text.

If there are more words than will fit into the window, arrows at top and/or bottom may be clicked on to allow you to see earlier or later suggestions. The word CANCEL lets you return to editing without selecting an alternative word.

While Single word is useful for just checking an occasional word, it would be tedious if you had to check every word this way, so Protext has the facility to check the document in other ways.

The Check From Cursor option is particularly useful for checking a section of text of text from the current cursor position to the end of the text.

When an unrecognised word is found, the same dialogue box is displayed as described for Single word. Once the correction has been made, the check can be recommenced by selecting Check from cursor once more.

Both the above options are particularly convenient for checking text when you have made alterations, but if you want to spell check a whole document, Protext has a quicker method.

Select the Check Whole Text option now. Once the spell check starts, the screen clears and is replaced by a new display. Across the top of the screen is the menu of available options and beneath it is the area in which unknown words are listed. Once all unknown words have been displayed, each word is offered in turn. The Store option is the same as

To save time you can spell check just one word

Working with more than one document

Protext allows you to load and edit many different documents (subject to available memory), switch between files and split the screen so that more than one file may be viewed at the same time.

To do this, load a document then select the Swap menu. At the bottom of the menu will be the name of the file you just loaded and beneath that an entry New File.

Click on the New File option and the existing document will disappear, leaving you with an empty document. Select the Load File option again and select another file for loading.

If you now open the Swap menu again you will find that the name of the second file you loaded has been added to the list of files being edited. Repeat the process again to load a third file. Up to 36 different files may be loaded at a time, subject to available memory.

Click on the name of the file you first loaded and it will be re-displayed. If you watch the status lines you will see that all the details change to reflect whichever file is the current file and that when you switch files, Protext remembers all details of the various settings and cursor positions for each file.

You can swap between files at will just by selecting the required file from the Swap menu. If you select New File and create a new document instead of loading an existing file, its name will change to Unnamed until such time as you give it a name by saving it, or by using the Name file option in the File menu.

Blocks of text may be copied from the alternate file to the current file at any time. Mark a block in the current file, then select another file. The file you have marked the block in has now become the alternate file.

Position the cursor where you want to copy the block to, then select the Copy Other Block option in the Block menu and the block will be copied into the current document.

Swap back to the file in which you originally marked the block and it will still be present. You can then delete the block if you no longer require it, or just de-select the block.

Delete the block for now and then swap back to the file into which you copied the block. Mark a block in this file, then swap back to the other file and use Copy other block again.

As you will see, blocks can be copied in either direction as the alternate file is always the one you were editing before you swapped to a new current file.

Using Protext's ability to swap between two documents for editing is a doddle

Laying out a document

One of the most useful features of a wordprocessor is the ease with which the appearance of a document can be changed. We shall start by looking at Ruler lines.

These determine where the left and right margins will be and can also contain tab markers. Protext has three types of tab markers – Normal, Decimal and Centre – indicated by !, . and C symbols in the ruler line.

You may have as many ruler lines as you want in a document and Protext stores these in the text. When the document is printed, the ruler line is recognised and the text printed according to the settings of the ruler, without the ruler line being printed.

Tabs are useful for a number of purposes, particularly for ensuring that columns of figures or text are aligned neatly and the different types of tab marker have different effects.

The normal tab marker (!) has the effect of aligning all text with its left edge aligned. The decimal tab marker (.) aligns numbers so that the decimal points all line up, or, if no decimal point, the number lines up with other numbers before the decimal point.

The decimal tab marker may also be used for right aligning text. The centre tab marker (C) causes text to be positioned equally either side of the marker. As many of these markers may be used in a line as you want and the different types may be mixed.

The active ruler is always 'the most recent ruler earlier in the document than the cursor", or, if there is no earlier ruler, the default ruler set with CONFIG and is displayed beneath the status lines when in Document mode.

If you scroll up and down through a document containing a number of rulers you will see that the displayed ruler line beneath the status lines always changes to reflect the currently active ruler.

The left and right margins may also be altered by dragging them to the required positions on the displayed ruler line. Note that this is not possible on the ruler line in the document, but ruler lines can be changed by editing them as normal text anyway.

One thing you will notice while experimenting with rulers is that certain things, such as moving a tab marker to a different column, have an immediate effect, while others appear to change nothing. An example of the latter is when you move the left and right margins.

By default, Protext has the Auto Reformat option selected in the Option menu, but it is important to understand the way that auto reformatting works. Protext reformats the paragraph when you perform some action which causes the cursor to move.

This is preferable to reformatting as each character is typed which would cause the words to keep shuffling around as you edit to maintain the formatting.

If you move through an existing document, having changed the ruler widths, no changes will be made to the format unless you edit the paragraphs, in which case they will be reformatted to the new margins, or specifically make use of the various reformatting commands.

A document, or part of it, may be re-formatted when required using either the Format Text option in the Text menu, Format Block in the Block menu, Or you can use the Format Paragraph or Format To End Of Para options in the Sundry menu.

All of these perform the same task, but on different parts of the document. The complete text within the relevant areas is reformatted, so that it appears with all the currently set effects and margins.

before, as also is Ignore, but the Change option is slightly different in that it just allows you to edit the offered word. Once completed, the word is re-checked and the next word offered.

The Lookup option is similar to that already described, but the correct word is selected by pressing the appropriate number alongside each offered word.

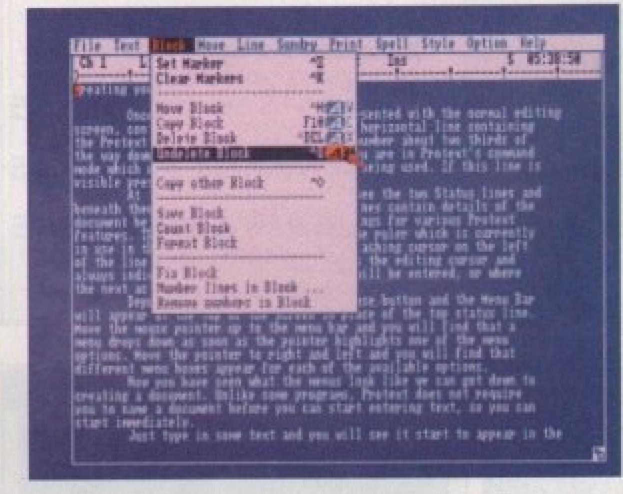
The View option allows you to see the unrecognised word in context by displaying a number of lines from the document, with the unknown word highlighted so that you can see what action you wish to take. The Back option is also extra and allows you to go back to the previous word if you want. The Check current block option performs the same type of spell check, but only on a marked block of text.

As already mentioned, this method of spell checking is the fastest, but if there is insufficient free memory Protext will be unable to check in this way. The solution is to save the document and then select the Check a File option.

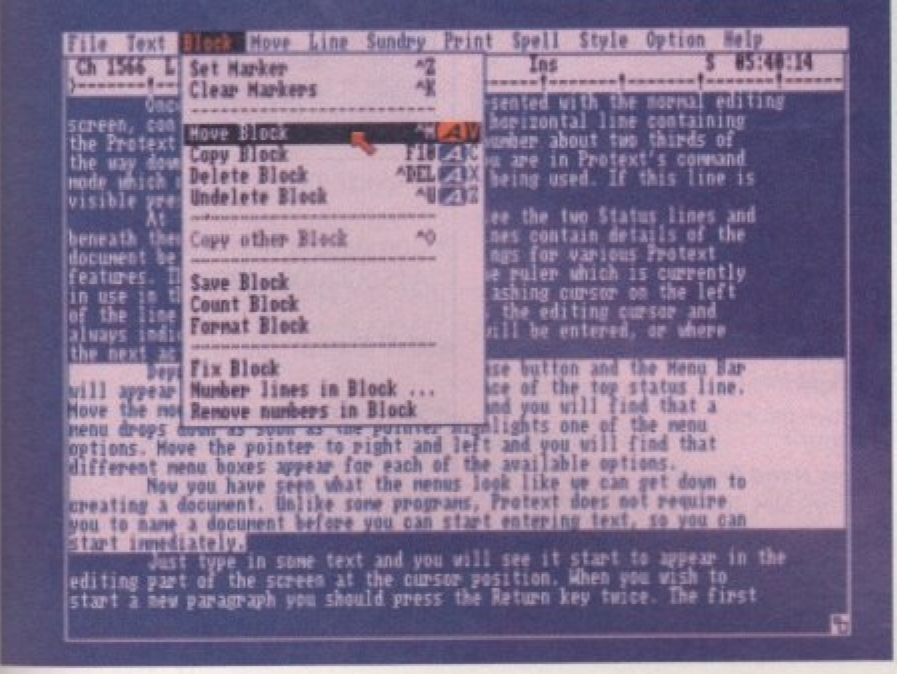
You are then presented with the file selector to select the file you want to check. The checking process functions in the same way as just described, but with large files the document may be checked in several sections, requiring you to correct any unrecognised words before continuing with the next section of the file. If there is still insufficient memory the Check from cursor option should be used as described above.

On completion, you are informed if any of the changes you have made affect the formatting of the text and are asked whether you wish to re-load the document. If you wish to continue editing the document, you should elect to reload it at this point.

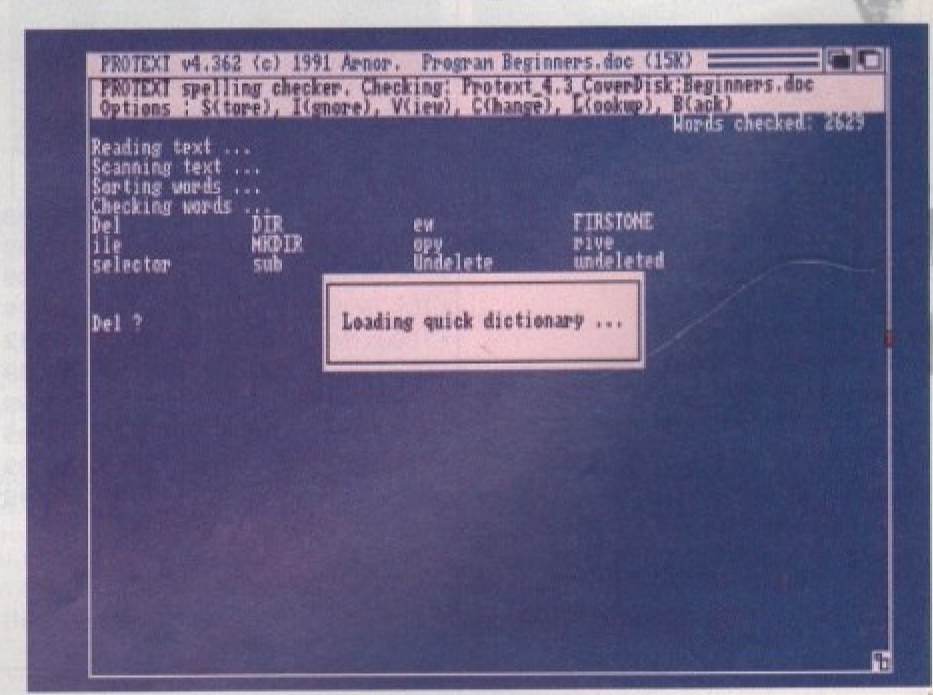
● Next month we'll be documenting some of the more advanced features of this powerful package.



If you Delete something by mistake, just use Undelete



Edit entire blocks of text in Protext



Protext's power Spellchecker at work



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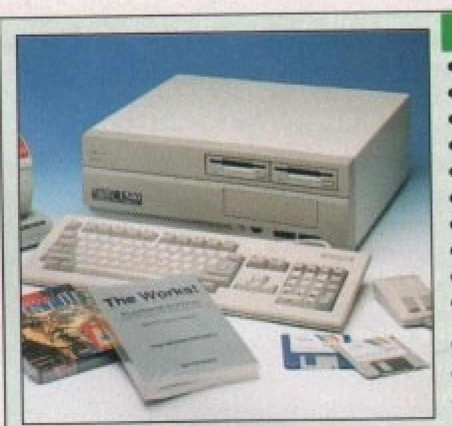


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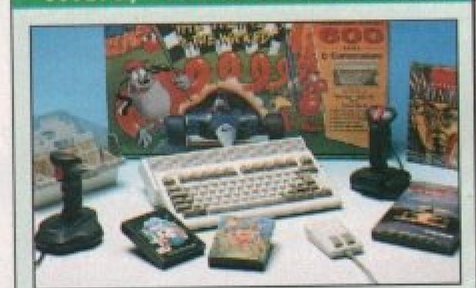
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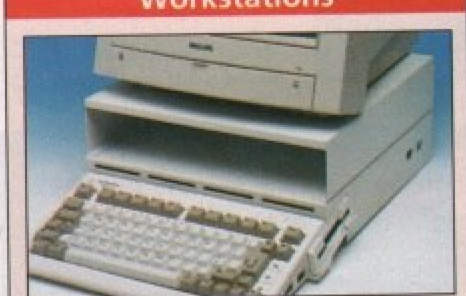
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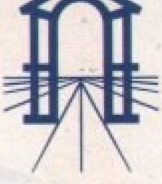
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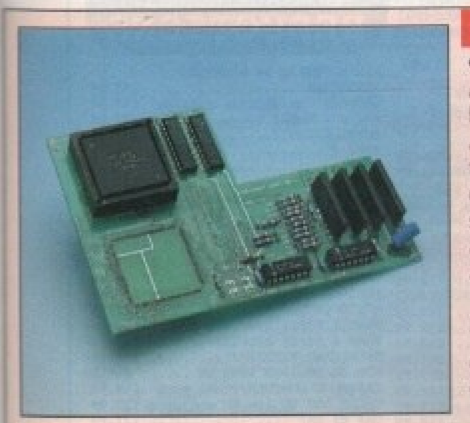
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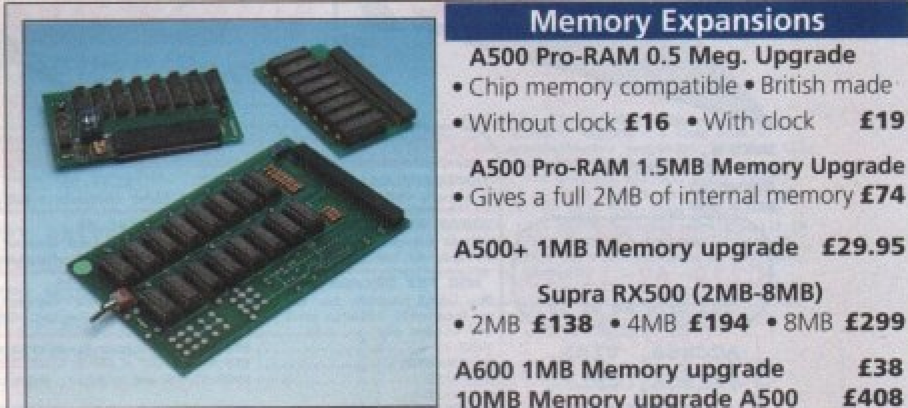
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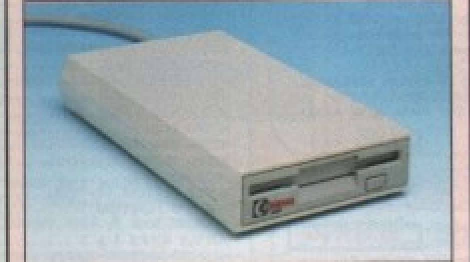
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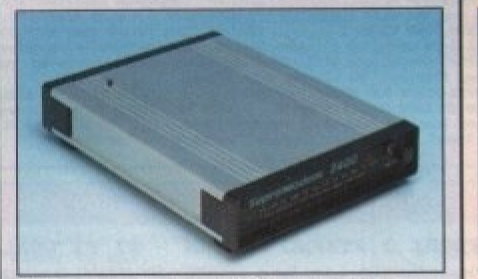
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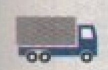
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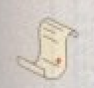
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Want a whole new world of graphics on your Canon BubbleJet? Ever fancied wandering around Ramsey Street? Phil Morse rounds up this month's eclectic selection of cheap and free software



A great selection of PD this time, especially chosen for the skint-after-Christmas crowd who desperately need software without the shelling out...

There's no Jukebox Jury this month (watch out for its return next time) but there are a number of excellent animations in the Dreams and Visions section, including the best Amiga movie ever! Stay with me, dear readers...

Moria v5.4

PD Soft

Running from the Workbench, this menu-driven adventure beckons you to "enter the dungeons of Moria...". Once you've selected the name, race, sex and class of your character, you can begin the game proper.

The different moves or activities available to you are pretty comprehensive – you can (once you've got 'em) use spells and scrolls, you're free to attack monsters, run, look around – indeed most of the usual adventure commands are there, tucked neatly away in the menus.

The graphically-represented playing area occupies most of the screen, and although the icons are small and a little plain, they do their job perfectly well – and it's not realism we're after here anyway, rather representation. The fantasy is always far more tangible if you let your imagination fill in the gaps.

Involved and thorough, this is bound to keep the silicon wanderers out there is Amiga land happy for a good while.

Canon Studio v1.1

PD Soft, by Wolf Faust

This is a utility written to provide support for all Amiga users who have Canon printer drivers. Basically it prints IFF graphics to a very high standard, but it's in its ease of use and flexibility that it proves its worth.

Printing is done straight from disk, which means that there's no call for a truckload of extra RAM every time you wish to print something more complex than a simple line drawing. Indeed, all you need is 300k spare, so it will run quite happily on an unexpanded machine.

It supports most IFF–ILBM formats, which means that you should find little difficulty with compatibility of graphics files and this program.

But its main claim to fame is surely the power it puts in your hands as regards the quality of the printouts. Suddenly you can print graphics with up to eight greyscales on any black and white Canon printer, including the whole BubbleJet range.

Should you be lucky enough to own one of their colour models, such as the BJ800, you will be absolutely astounded by the 24-bit-quality printing capabilities that this program lends your printouts.

There is a small but detailed ReadMe to get you started, but in its complexity this program remains simple to use, and you shouldn't come unstuck.

Should you have a Canon printer/driver and even the vaguest interest in printing graphics, be kind to yourself and order a copy of this essential disk.

Neighbours

17 Bit, 2250A/B, by Arron

Here is a little beauty, as they'd say down under. Even if you don't give a XXXX for the TV programme, the concept and the humour will more than likely endear you to this original graphical adventure.

Here's the plot – Paul has bought Ramsey Street! He's finally done it, the cold-hearted fiend, and the residents aren't too impressed. Your hapless task is to stop him. A dodgy digitised title screen from the TV starts you off When in control I headed straight for Jim and Helen's to do a little investigating.

Every location has a digitised piccie straight from the program, which is a major selling point, because it's a lot of fun. There are all the basic adventure commands which can be controlled from the mouse, aiding your progress.

There was a bottle on the table in Jim and Helen's house. So I took it, only to find it disappear from the screenshot and appear at the bottom of the screen in my inventory section. Very nice!

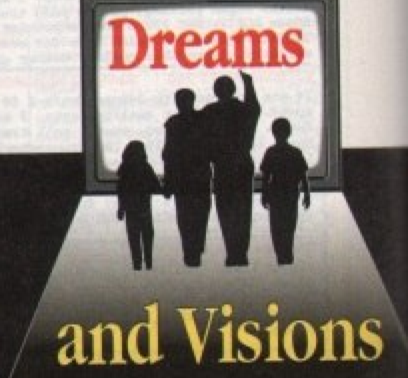
Anyway, later I found the twins in conversation with the ever-wonderful, world-wandering Dorothy, and decided to ask Christine to help me "stitch up" that rascal Robinson.

Being his wife she refused, but her sister – loyal as ever – told me that J[...] Mangel could "lend" me a key to Pau[...] office. What a girl!

I could document my attempts to sa[...] Ramsey Street forever – suffice to say tha[...] was highly improper and had a lot of fu[...] in failing to achieve anything constructi[...] at all.

My only slight gripe is some of th[...] author's comments. Most are high[...] amusing, taking a dig at the aforemen[...] tioned XXXX and its contemporaries fo[...] instance, but adolescent sexism has n[...] place anywhere.

Maybe the author does really believ[...] that one of the programme's character[...]



A wide selection of Amiga art, animation and all things pictorial this month, starting with the amusing Road Hog Animation *(Hugh Grove, 17 Bit, 2302A/B)*.

This two-disk cartoon tells the story of a laddish motorist with an evil grin and an Acme Animal Annihilator fitted to his car, who likes nothing better than to cruise the countryside looking for creatures to squash.

Well, he puts pay to the life of an innocent worm (who, judging by the lovely red rose he was carrying, was more than likely on the way to his doting worm-ess), but like all good stories, Mr Bad gets his come-uppance in the end – this time, at the hands of a hedgehog with a secret! Intrigued? Well all I can say is that it makes a refreshing change, if you know what I mean.

The cartoon is impressively animated, with fine attention to detail – the evil motorist and the hedgehog both draw you in to the action thanks to the animation of their features. Give it a go.

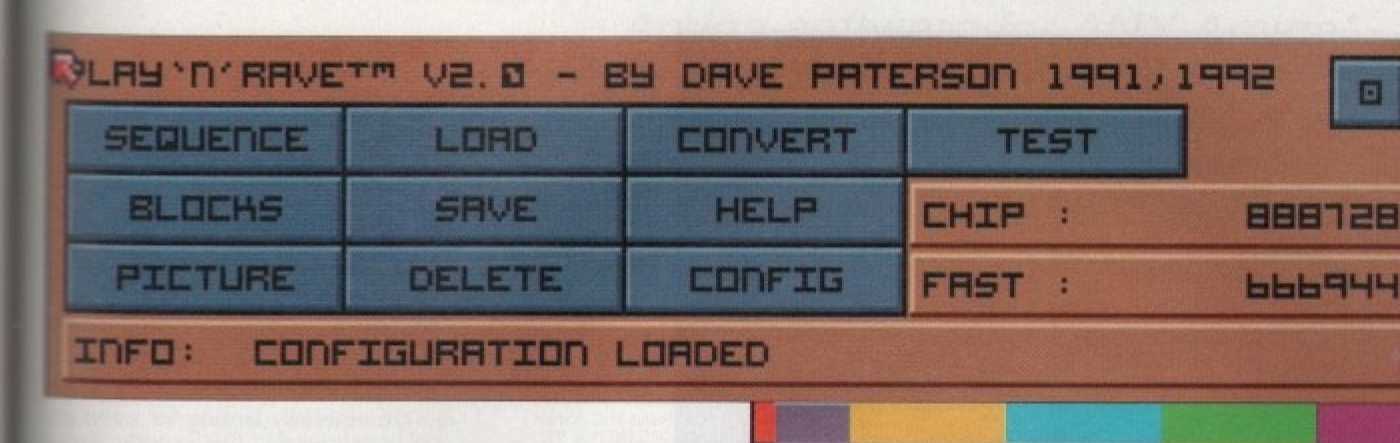
Santa's Grotto *(17 Bit, 2295)* shows a rather sickly family in a rather sickly Yuletide scene with a rather sickly Santa – except, look! They're getting up to a load of mischief!

Little Jimmy is firing a pea-shooter, the cat's pulling sister's jogging pants down (I jest thee not) and various other



The hedgehog has the last laugh... but why?

A very sick instrument indeed



Play'n'Raves information front

Melanie, is "not the prettiest girl in the world, but does have a strange attraction", but he should have kept such rubbish to himself. Still, this game is by and large wonderful – get it!

Play and Rave 2

Virus Free PD, CLU9, by Dave Paterson

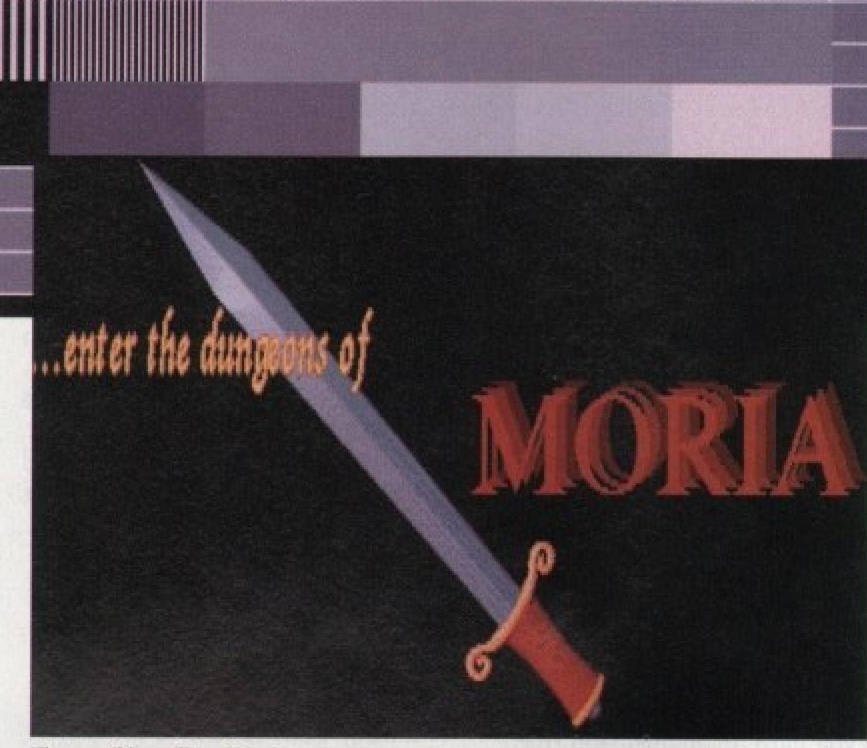
This is a music module linker/demo maker. Basically, it allows you to link together any number of pre-written Amiga music modules and play them in a predefined sequence.

Meanwhile, the screen displays, chops and changes and generally keeps the audience amused with pictures – again they're chosen by you, and faded in and out, changed and so on wherever you wish them to be.

The program is compatible with all Amigas, even the CDTV, and you don't need a keyboard, as it's totally mouse controlled. Compatible with hard drives, the finished demo can be saved where you wish, and spread across any number of floppy disks.

There are basic controls over the music and pictures, and I would imagine that the largest bunch that such a program would appeal to would be the demo-makers whose main interest is music.

For instance, a nice picture show could be generated by anyone with neither the time nor the interest to generate one from scratch, simply by using existing picture files from anywhere, or maybe scanning record covers, pop stars' faces and so on.



Whay better way to test Play'n'Rave than the test card

The tangible reality of Moria...



Ever wondered what an Indonesian bank note looks like?

tomfooleries are goin' down in the Grotto, so to speak.

This is pretty basic, static stuff and flat as a pancake, but to be fair there's been a bit of attention and thought put into what is actually going on (several things happen at the same time) and as it's the only Crimbo anim I've had, I'll let it off.

The GIF Slideshow *(17 Bit)* contains a set of piccies grouped into various categories – "Space" gives us various digitised photos of the earth, spacemen and radio telescopes, for instance, and "Money" displays the fronts and backs of obscure bank notes (Indonesia obscure enough?) – they've even printed "specimen" over them!

Some of these pics are mildly interesting, but at the end of the day, anyone can digitise photographs, however pretty they may be. A passable curiosity.

By the way, the Highlander demo *(17 Bit, 2288A/B)* fares similarly – all good stuff, but try doing something original with such rich source material!

One demo which does do something original, if unbelievably crass, is the Gladiators slideshow *(17 Bit, 2278A/B)* giving Top Trump-style "fact cards" (complete with photos) of all your fave Gladiators stars. I'm sorry, but there are limits...

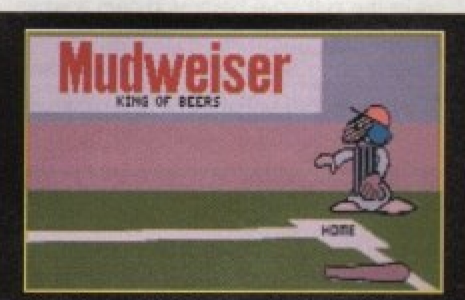
Robert Leiper's Slemmings *(17 Bit, 2284)* has our fave suicidal chums playing baseball. It's nicely animated stuff complete with action replays, and there's beer humour there too (right lads?).

The style is original, and for this alone – and the rather strange closing sequence – this demo, rough around the edges and all, deserves a look in.

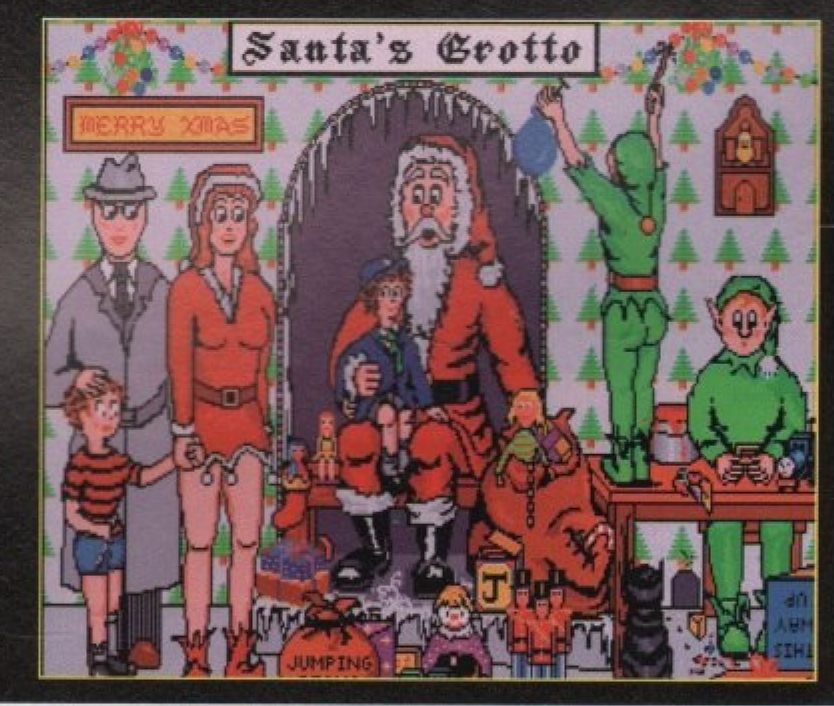
I can't finish with out telling you about an amazing video cassette called Space Wars. *It's available from 17-Bit (come on other PD houses, get your stuff to me! This isn't a 17-Bit monopoly!) and it features an eight-minute Amiga animation – although "movie" is probably a better term.*

This video contains far and away the most impressive animation I have ever seen, period. Based on the Star Wars plot, it is wickedly humorous, and Amiga graphics supremo Tobias Richter should feel justifiably proud of this 50 frames-per-second, 24-bit, HAM-based masterpiece.

Still not reaching for the phone? Well, it took four A3000s six weeks working around the clock to render this animation. Get ordering, it's wicked! Laters!



Lemmings socking it out on the baseball diamond



It's like the Do They Know It's Christmas single cover



The beast-like creation in the middle is a demon, and he's not popping in for a cup of tea

Calling PD libraries

If you run a PD library, or have released anything as PD, then send it to me – and that's an order! Although I can't promise to review everything, I do look at every submission – what more can a harassed reviewer offer?

I'm especially looking for weird and wonderful PD (go on! deviate!) as well as music disks (they don't have to be rave or dance) – anything you think will grab a jaded, world-weary hack's attention. The address?

Phil Morse, PD Submissions
Amiga Computing, Europa House
Adlington Park, Macclesfield, SK10 4NP

Jiffy bags in the area!

Storyland 2

Amiganuts

This is described as an "activity adventure". It's pleasingly simple, being based around clear pictures of various objects and a central "text box", with a big, chunky font.

There's the usual mix of magic and spells, seemingly irrelevant objects which turn out to be useful, and some nice animated graphical bits, such as the one when you move to another land (there are five) which looks like the Time Tunnel, as in the cult sci-fi bash as shown a while back on TV.

Obviously intended for children, and testing powers of memory as well as logic, this game nevertheless would best be played with an adult present or available – sometimes it's not quite as intuitive as it could be.

Still, it's all presented very clearly, and I've never seen an adventure quite like this before. I liked it.



Storyland 2 is simple and colourful

Wizard Wars

Nebula Software

A strategy game for one to five players, Wizard Wars is complex and compelling.

Once you've told the computer how many people are playing and what their names are (the computer can play for any of the players should a deficiency of willing humans be the problem) you are shown a map of the island on which the game takes place, complete with features such as hills, mountains, forests, cities, villages and castles.

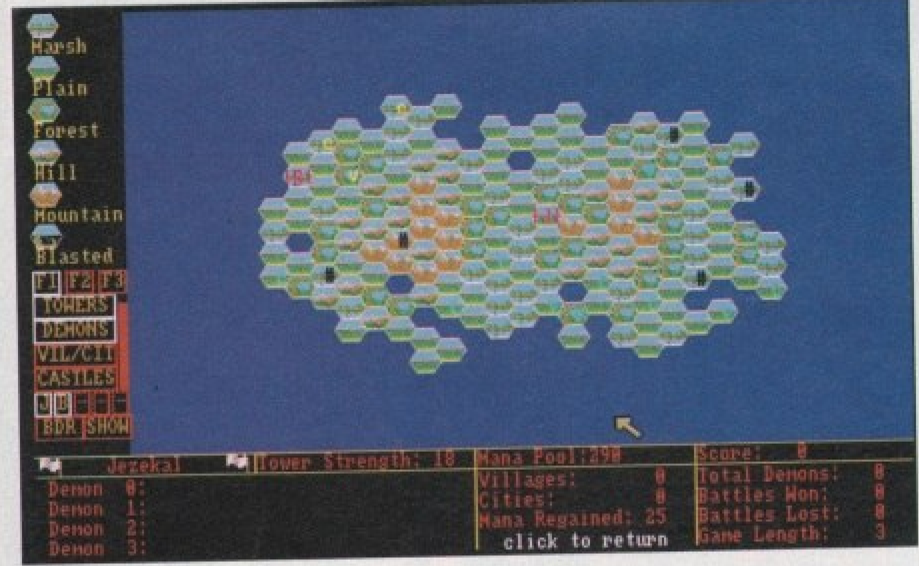
You are a wizard, and you must destroy all the other players' wizards in order to claim dominance over the island. Quite why you couldn't all live together as one family is not explained, but suffice to say that none of you are in any mood for conciliation.

Like the other wizards, you live in a tower. You need to destroy their towers to get them, and to do this you must summon demons. To summon demons you must gather certain attributes.

Pacifists will frown to know that even if you wish to do a little pottering around instead of mass destruction, you'll still need demons, because they are your only protection against the other wizards' demons, unleashed to get you.

The graphics are good, it's well programmed, and any strategy fan who's looking for a new challenge will find much of interest in this game.

Apart from one or two niggles – the program returned me to AmigaDOS once unexpectedly and is sometimes not as friendly as it could be – this is rather good.



The Wizard Wars island

Illegal OctaMED

Some PD libraries have been advertising OctaMED v3 when it is, in fact, a copyrighted program, making this action illegal.

Apart from v1 and the non-save v4, OctaMED is only available from Amiganuts at 169 Dale Valley Road, Southampton SO1 6QX. Anyone else offering this program is breaking the law.

Contact addresses

Amiganuts, 169 Dale Valley Road, Southampton SO1 6QX

PD Soft, 1 Bryant Avenue, Southend-on-Sea SS1 2YD

17 Bit, First Floor Offices, 2/8 Market Street, Wakefield WF1 1DH

Virus Free PD, 31 Fardingdon Road, Swindon SN1 5AR

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Master Virus Killer v2.2	£2.00	AmiBase Pro, not the PD version	£8.00
Ami/FastBack, hard disk backup	£8.00		

Public Domain

We have too many titles to list here in full, so offer our catalogue disk for the price of £1.00 inc. redeemable on first PD purchase over £5.00. The catalogue contains two games, DCopy2, BBase v5 and Epoch 3 as well as a full list of our library.

T-Bag Disks

As the European distributors of the T-Bag series, we have the lastest as they arrive. Price, £3.00 per issue.

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PC Task, IBM CGA emulator. 3 Disks. Magnetic Pages, multi-media tool.
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Programmers

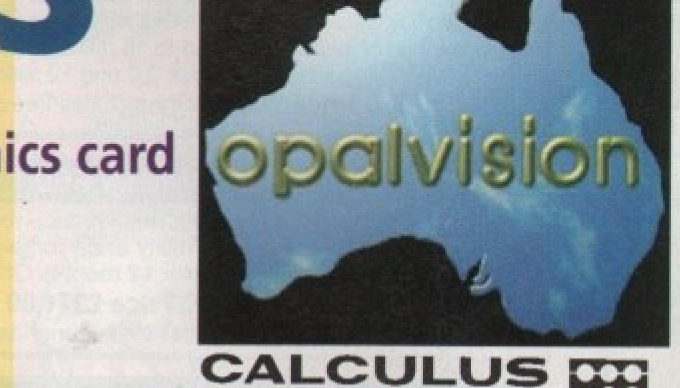
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**Amiga Computing, Calculus Competition,
Europress Direct, PO Box 2,
Ellesmere Port L65 3EA**

– and make sure it arrives by February15, 1993.

Good luck. Someone's going to have a very happy New Year!

- Please note that a monitor is not included in this OpalVision system competition.

For more information on OpalVision phone 0543 251275

You will find the answers to these questions in the OpalVision advert on page 19



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Which Amiga's are compatible with OpalVision system?
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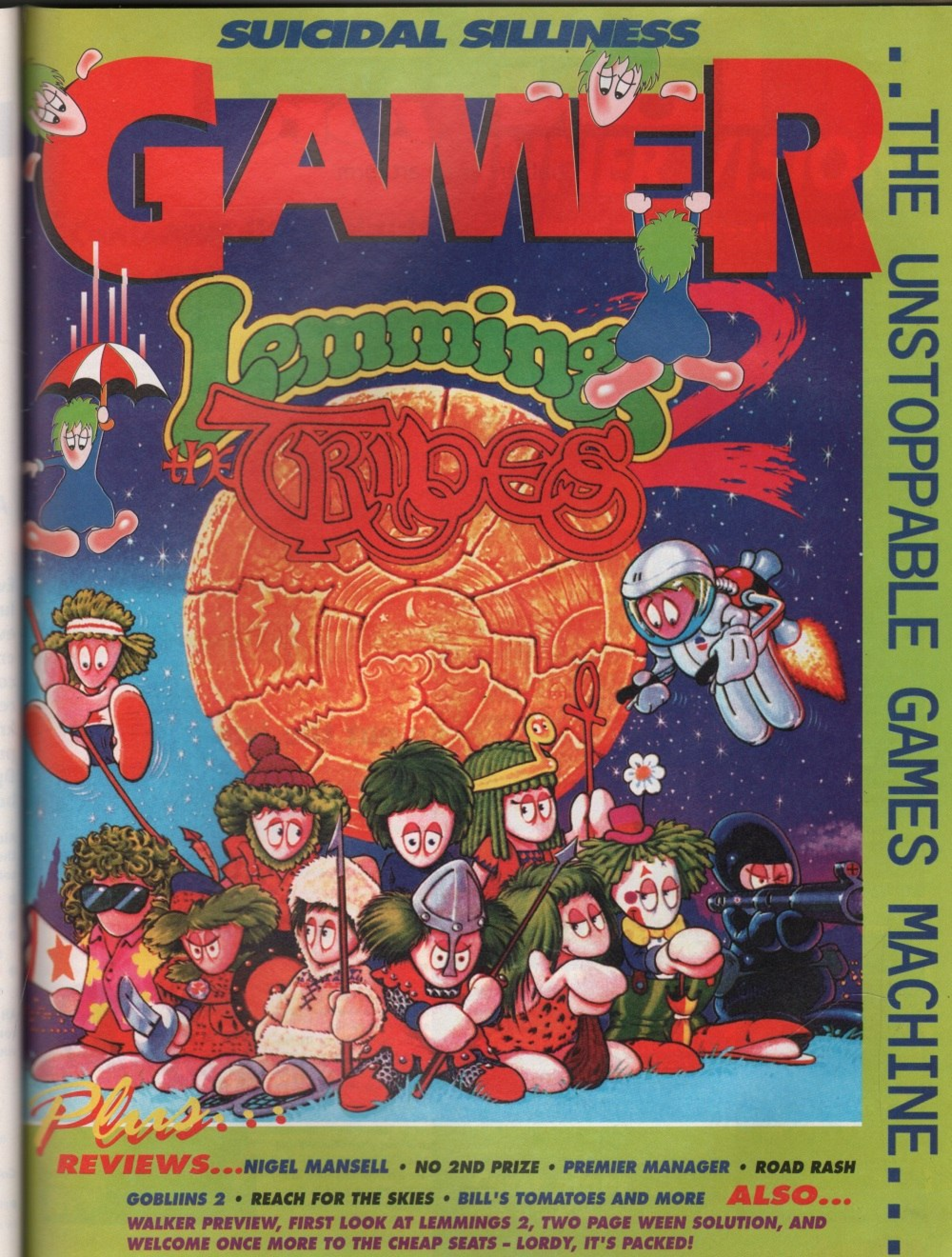
Question 2:
What 24-bit game is supplied with the OpalVision system?
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Cobblers as an art form

News flash

Thank God that articles like the "Screen Dreams" piece that appeared in this month's copy of The Face are infrequent, and that misinformed writers such as the one responsible for the piece are few and far between in the computer world.

I would advise any male gamer out there to read this article just to see how clueless these idiots are. I say male because the article is directly aimed at men.

Gavin Hills, author of the aforesaid piece, makes a sad, unfounded and pathetic attempt to trivialise and break down the computer games world into psychological similes.

It is clear from the article that Mr Hills has no idea of the current games market. Your average grandmother knows as much about the current games scene.

For those of you who haven't read the article, I'll give you a brief idea of what he was saying. The opening paragraph has references to the fourth level of Desert Storm – an inaccurate reference I might add, as the game is Desert Strike, a Megadrive title.

How many of you male games out there agree that "masturbation and computer games go hand in hand"? Not many I'd imagine. And how many dedicated male gamers agree that "shooting them up on screen and soiling your favourite hanky may both be furtive exercises..."?

He goes on with this poor excuse for a Freudian interpretation of the computer game world, deciding that racing games encourage joy riding, that computer games are a sexual outlet for the average adolescent teenager, and indeed that they're "a healthy alternative for potential child murderers and perverts".

But his doesn't stop there, the obscenities go on. "Knights of Knobtt", "Colostomy Castle"... I think old Gavin is the one who needs the psychoanalysis, don't you?**

They think it's all over...

But they're wrong – it's not over yet. Sensible Soccer, the biggest sport game of 1992, has just been improved. With the new title of Sensible Soccer v1.1, the game has loads more features and is almost guaranteed to be in the top three Christmas sellers.

It now features new and improved goalkeepers. In the first game the goalies were a bit wishy washy, but now the goalies can recover more quickly, catch the ball properly, punch the ball away and when it's too hard to catch and tip the ball over the bar or around the post. Thus all these coupled together make the goalies a lot harder to score against.

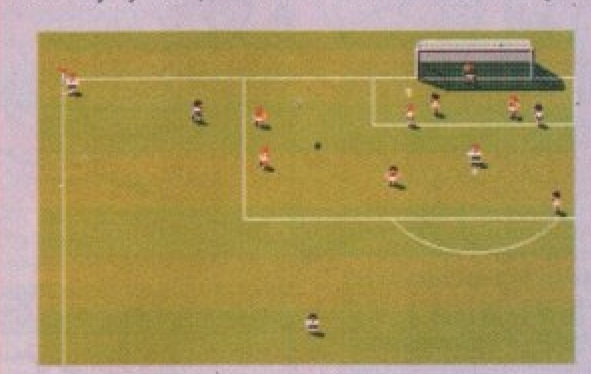
For all you Vinny Jones fans there is trouble on the horizon. Any cynical professional fouls will now earn your players a red card and a long walk back to the dressing room – Plus there's more!

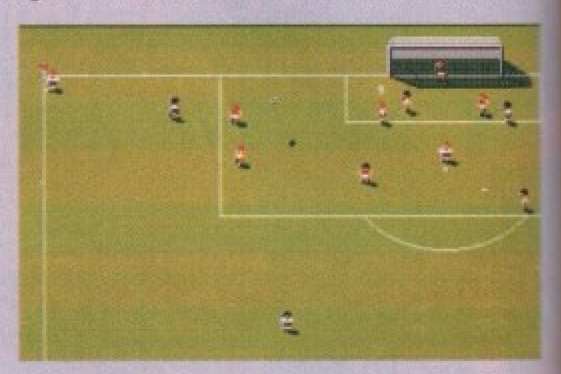
The new backpass rule is included, so that means your goalie can't pick the ball up, but he can run all the way up the pitch and score a goal.

All the new season's team and players names are included plus there are some more brand new comedy custom teams.

Well what can I say? I'm speechless. Having played the new version I can say that it's loads better and much more fun than the original – a bargain if ever I saw one.

There is good news for people who own the original game. You can upgrade your copy by sending your disks to Renegade. Call them on 071-481 9214 for more details.





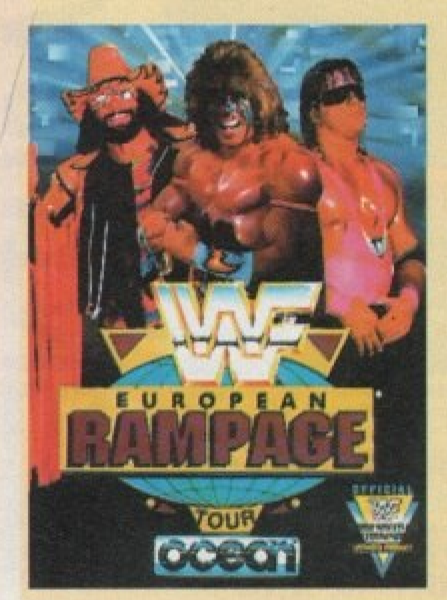
Kixx out the jams...

US Gold's budget label Kixx has just released a brand new sub label. Entitled Kixx XL, the company have a whole lorry-load of forthcoming releases lined up. These include Midwinter, Battlehawks 1942 and Future Wars which are reviewed in the Cheap Seats this month – check them out.

Also released are Zak McKraken and the Alien Mindbenders and Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade – The Graphic Adventure. The games are more expensive than your average budget software. All of them cost £12.99 except for Indiana Jones which will cost you a penny under £15

Looks like a lot of money for a budget game, but I think you'll agree that these games are all really good and are worth that little bit extra. Just don't make the prices any higher, OK? All releases mentioned here should be available now.

Large sweaty men and big weapons



The race for the Christmas number one is hotting up and it looks as though Ocean are preparing to load their big guns. Coming your way this Crimbo is Lethal Weapon, WWF European Rampage and as previously reported Cool World and Universal Monsters.

Lethal Weapon is based on the trials and tribulations of Martin Riggs and Roger Murtaugh from the Lethal Weapon film trilogy. You get to choose to play either Riggs or Murtaugh – each has varied abilities and has to tackle the missions in a different way.

There are five missions in all in which you have to conquer drug smugglers, terrorists and the Organisation or save hostages under siege.

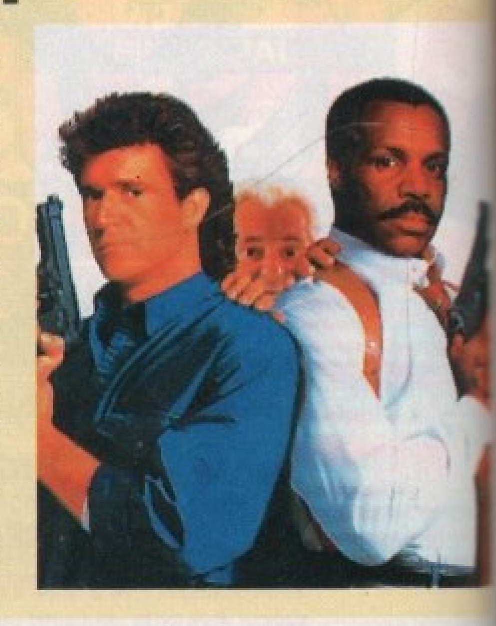
The game which is an arcade shoot-'em-up is Ocean's biggest film licence ever and should be available now for a measly price of £25.99.

Ocean's big game is WWF European Rampage and hopefully it'll be better than their first effort. This time all your favourite wrestlers unite for a European Rampage Tour.

Hulk Hogan, The Ultimate Warrior, The Natural Disasters, The Nasty Boys and Legion of Doom are all featured. The game can be played as a two-player Tag–Team or a one-on-one grudge match.

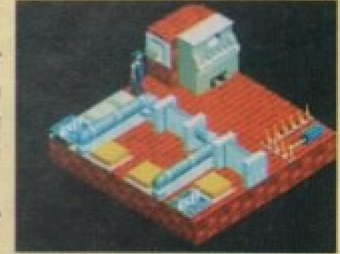
It says on my wonderful press release that there are over 62 (count 'em!) individual moves for each wrestler which I find very hard to believe, but we shall see.

Expect to see a review fairly soon. WWF European Rampage will cost you £25.99 and should be available at the beginning of December.



Contraptionsgate – Cute repair man in bug scandal

Mindscape's next release is a game called Contraptions. It's an isometric 3D puzzle game very much in the style of the now classic D/Generation.



You take the part of a "cute" repair man and must work your way through a huge machine fixing "bugs" and making repairs while looking for the tools with which you can exact these repairs.

Switching levers, jumping on pressure pads and turning screws will enable you to enter other rooms which in turn allows you to progress through the levels.



If it's half as good as D/Generation then it'll be very good indeed. Contraptions should be available around about now for the quite cheap price of £19.99.

BBRACSLE, Hmm, err I know, SCRABBLE...

Yes, the world's leading word game is just about to appear on your Amiga. Billed as the ultimate game of verbal wizardry to hit the home computer.

Computer Scrabble is the definitive '90s version of the famous game. It's the same fun-packed blend of skill and chance which enhances your word power as you play, but it does have some special features.

Brilliant computer graphics give an extra dimension to the game, as well as having the advantage of all pieces staying on board, so there's no chance of one of your relatives having one too many on Boxing Day and crashing into the board and ruining the game.

Locked into the game's memory is every page of the Chambers Official Scrabble Dictionary (over 126,000 words) so bluffs can be called in seconds. A special souvenir computer print-out of the final board position can be put into effect at the touch of a button, so you can remember how badly you lost.

Release date and price are as yet unknown as we go to press, but it should be available very soon.

Kirk to bridge, I'm skint...

Hoo-ray. The game that furry collars and strange people who drive Capris have been waiting for! Star Trek the game is being ported over from the PC.

If like me you are an intensely sad and unfortunate git and you rush home to watch the re-runs of the '60s classic, then the game, when it finally reaches the Amiga, will be a necessity.

Sources say that the majority of the story lines have been taken from the four series with all the Romulans, Klingons and Forms of Alien Life that are "not as we know it".

GAMER

INNER VISION

Full to bustin' - not even room for the charts!

REVIEWS

REGULARS

Laugh this off! Ayrton Sena!

NIGEL MANSELL'S WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP

GREMLIN ▪ £29.99 ▪ 1 meg ▪ Joystick/keyboard ▪ Out now

Elsewhere in this stupendous issue of Gamer you will find me singing in a loud voice the praises of Gremlin's other release, Premier Manager, and vowing to collar either Biff or Ben into reviewing Mansell so I can spend as much time a possible with my beloved Wycombe Wanderers.

Well, a true indication of the authority I wield is evident in the fact that here I am, reviewing them both.

Have you ever noticed how much of a miserable sod Nigel Mansell is? It's unbelievable – the guy lives in a three million pound house in a tax haven, and gets an eight figure salary for doing the thing he loves most, yet the only time we see any noticeable twitch of his moustache is when Ayrton Senna spins out off the track in a horrifying accident.

All credit to the bloke though – not only is he one of the few truly successful contemporary British sportsmen, but he also has to cope with the slobbering schoolboy adulation bestowed upon him by the ever-excited Murray Walker.

In order to supplement his meagre income, Nige has lent his name to the latest go-very-fast-around-a-track-'em-up from those Lotus-like fiends from Sheffield.

Ben had a good look at the game for his review in ST User Gamer, and was far from impressed, which worried me greatly as I didn't want to believe that the game I had been looking forward to so much was a small but pungent heap of Tibetan llama droppings. Nervously, I investigated...

On loading you are presented with a generous options screen that as well as offering you the standard gear and control method choices, also enquires politely as to whether you would like to "improve with Mansell" or take lessons in "driving school" before launching yourself into the full race season.



Ah, Silverstone – home of the British GP and £5 pints of lager

Well I'm no nance, and was raring for a bit of real racing action, but, dedicated chap that I am, thought it only fair to explore all the avenues, so to speak.

Driving school was my first stop, and the concept is very simple. Choose any track on which to practice – no other cars are present, and the maximum speed of your car is restricted, the idea being that this will enable you to learn how to control the car. Come on, please – I'm sure we can cope with moving the joystick from side to side and pressing the Fire button occasionally. One visit to driving school and you'll never return – it's daft.

Improve With Mansell allows us to zoom around the track to the accompaniment of a running commentary from the man himself. This is a much better idea than the Driving School – the racing line is indicated, and in theory the comments from Nigey-babes should teach us the best techniques to use.

In practice, however, whenever I tried looking up from the track at the snippets offered ("stay on the track", "avoid hitting things"), the result was invariably my car wrapped around some advertising hording or other. It's a nice touch, but not much help at all, I'm afraid.

After dispensing with all the frills and inconsequentialities it was time to get me some action. Every track from the 1992 Grand Prix circuit is here in all its macadamised glory – you can choose to race a single circuit, in which case you take your pick, or pack some clean clothes and a couple of new engines and opt for the full GP season.

The full season begins in South Africa and culminates in Australia as does the real thing. A handy intro screen gives some indication as to which bits on your car you should tamper with by outlining the nature of the track – bends, straights and so on.

You can if you wish get straight into a race, in which case you will find yourself at the back of the 12-car grid. Qualifying is a better idea – two laps round the track with just a couple of other cars provides an excellent (and a little too easy) chance of beginning the race on the front row.



Off to a good start – even Johnny Herbert's in front of us

As far as the gameplay goes NMWC is good, but not great. The tracks are well laid out but the screen updates are just a bit too slow to simulate a Formula One racing car travelling at nigh on 200 miles per hour.

The miniturised track in the top corner of the screen succeeds where "Improve With Mansell" fails in providing you with as much in-race information as you need.

All it does is tell you where the cars are on the track, but then you're not really intersted in the price of mild Brazilian cheddar when your cheeks are wobbling with G-force, are you?

One element of the game which I suppose is realistic, but annoying nonetheless, is the sheer difficulty of overtaking other drivers. The only time I won any races was when I started in pole position.

Points are awarded as per the usual Grand Prix rules, and a place in the top three in any race earns an animated sequence which takes a while to load and would be better left out.

As you would expect from Gremlin, Mansell is a polished game, not without its faults, but which should appeal to race fans due to the options it sports and the full GP season.

Paul

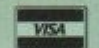


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Hey, I remember this! Road Rash was the second game I ever played after buying a Megadr – oops, nearly dropped myself in it there.

Ahem, well anyway, it was – and jolly good fun it was too – whizzing around various fictional parts of America on a fast bike, avoiding the police and knocking off anyone who got in my way. Top entertainment. At the time.

And now here we are in Amigaland 18 months later, busy reviewing all the first goodies of the New Year, when who should pop up for perusal but my old mate. Great – I couldn't wait for a quick shufty.

Road Rash on the Megadrive was accompanied by a stirring tale of competition and confrontation between two mean riders over a girl – they ended up facing each other on a treacherous highway for a no holds barred race without rules.

The girl swooned over the winner, the race was brilliant etc etc, and it was decided that it should be held every year to find the best "rasher", or some such gubbins.

Well we've all grown up a bit since then, and EA suffice with telling Amiga owners that "nice guys come last", and leave it at that.

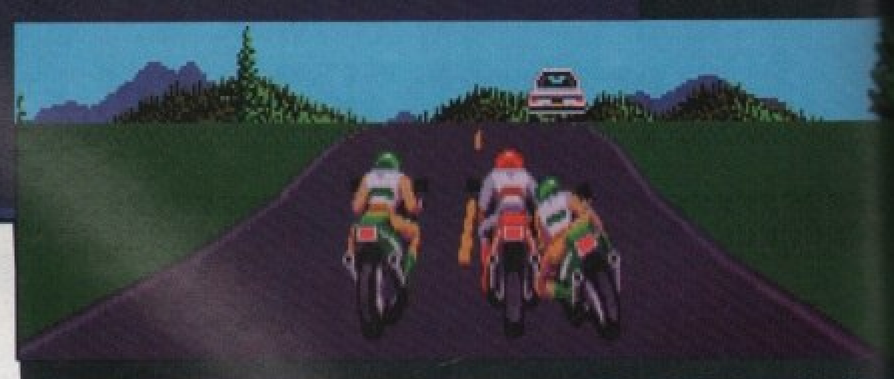
As with any racing game, the aim is obviously to win races, and since we've just been informed that mild-mannered citizens such as ourselves generally come a good way down the field, it's necessary to enter into a little roughness.

We have two basic moves with which to temporarily immobilise our leather-clad competitors, and on which the game was really sold to Megadrive owners.

Depending on which joystick control method is chosen – there are two – either a dab on the Fire button or a quick push upwards on the stick will see your rider punch anyone within arm's reach.

Similarly, by pushing down on the stick you are able to kick anyone who rides too close for comfort. A particularly well placed punch or kick can see an adversary knocked off his or her bike, but that doesn't mean that they're out of the race – you'll notice them in your rear view mirrors as they scurry back towards their bikes and re-mount.





Tired of HMV T-shirts, Biff models his spiffing new cricket sweater

It's more than just the tyres squealing as Rude Boy delivers an elbow to the parts you shouldn't

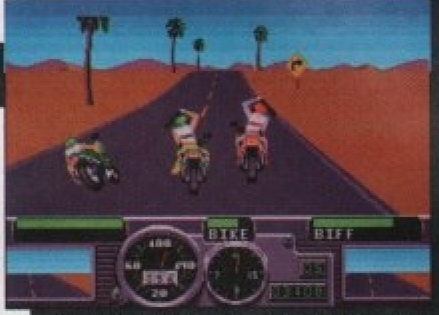
Bikes are the ultimate status symbol for types like yourself – you begin the whole shenanigans on a Shuriken 400, the motorcycling equivalent of the XR2, in that it looks quite nice and sounds OK, but is about as likely to take you to the front of the pack as a Sainsbury's trolley with a wonky wheel.

You will therefore be wanting to win some money in order to invest in a better bike, and the only way to do it is by winning races.

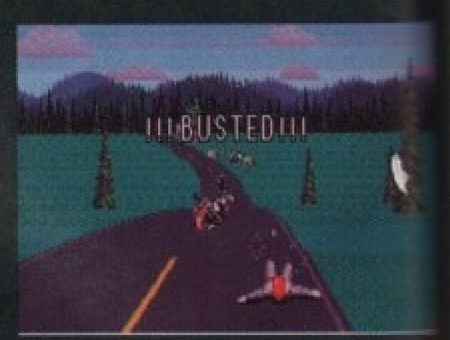
There are five tracks in all, and despite boasting such varied names as Grass Valley and Palm Desert, they are disappointingly alike in terms of layout.

Beginning always as last in the line of 15 competitors, you must fight your way through to at least fourth place on each circuit before qualifying for the second stage.

Each time you take a fall or if, say, you're careless enough to let another rider knock you off, the energy bar on your handlebars reduces accordingly. Your trusty cycle also has its own bar – if this reaches the bottom you'll find yourself out of the race and likely as not in the knocking shop for some costly repairs.



It's that Biff again! A swift clubbing to the head should relieve those frustrations



Subtle as ever, the police knock you to the floor for having a faulty tail light

Everything I remember playing on the Megadrive version is here – the tunes have been watered down a bit, but the colourful and fast-moving multi parallax backgrounds are if anything enhanced.

What about the bike speed then? We-ell... there's really no skirting around the fact that it's not very fast at all – this is quite a major problem and detracts from the game in a big way.

You see, it's great fun riding around the five tracks punching and kicking as many people as you can, and it's nice to choose a new bike when you've won enough money.

The policemen and women who constantly patrol are a nice addition, and the occasional cow on the road adds a touch of humour. But what we really need from a racing game is speed – if there's no speed it just doesn't feel like a race. And frankly Road Rash doesn't.

I'm still a fan of the game, but I'm not blind to its faults. Couple all the polished elements with the lack of speed and the fact that the later stages are nothing but more laps around the same track, and what you have is an original and fun game that offers not much real challenge and soon becomes boring when played for any length of time.

Paul



In the euphoria our hero mistakenly believes the handlebars are somewhere above his head

VISION

Everything is well drawn and the backgrounds are dead smart.

AUDIO

Run-of-the-mill bike noise. Tunes aren't exactly pumping.

PLAYABILITY

Easy to play but too slow.

ADDICTION

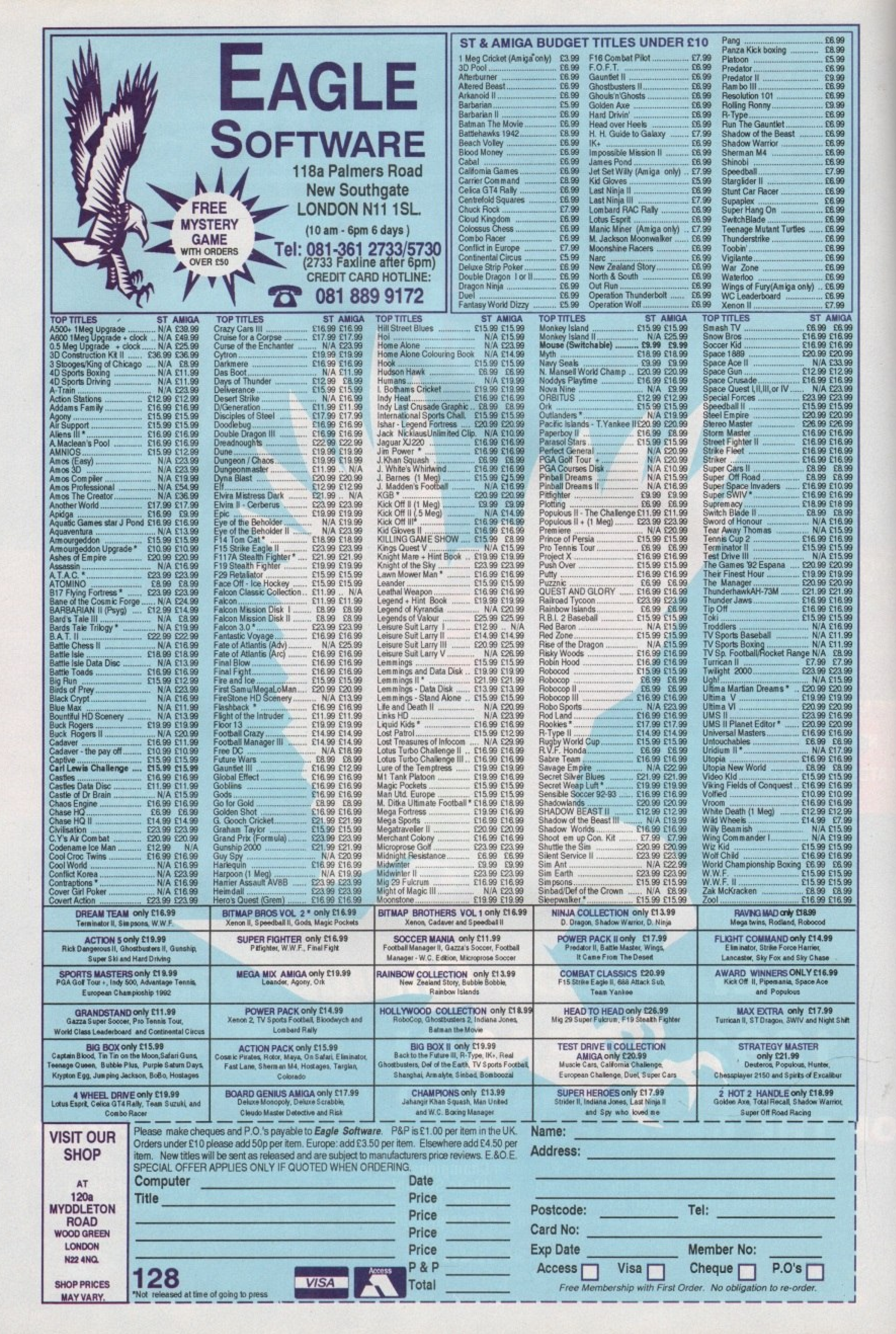
Excellent short term appeal. Little challenge.

73%

Worse than air sickness, it's the...

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LEMMINGS 2

Paul Roundell, the closest thing to a lemming we've got, points the stupid creatures in the right direction

Do you remember – oh, about two years ago – Britain was in the relatively early stages of a deep depression, repossessions were on the up, unemployment was spiralling once again, and to top it all England were knocked out of the World Cup thanks to a pathetic Chris Waddle penalty. Remember? It's all coming back, isn't it?

Psygnosis – a fine upstanding software house from the city that gave us the Beatles and car theft – took a good look at the sorry faces of the people around them, and were saddened.

What was once a great and happy land was awash with gloom – the population needed something to make life worth living once more.

So they created Lemmings – a 459,000-level cartoony puzzle frenzy that was so original, so funny and so damned addictive that the economic and social problems of the British Empire were solved overnight.

OK, so it didn't have quite that much impact – but the vast majority of Amiga and ST owners who played Lemmings found themselves spirited away to a distant plane where the existential problems of humanity became much less important than saving the big-nosed beasts. Yes, it went down a treat.

A year or so later, as discontent began to reassert itself and the nobs at Psygnosis became bored with the Porsches and Versaci suits that were the fruits of Lemmings, a humble programmer presented Bernard Psygnosis with his next meal ticket – Oh No! More Lemmings, the data disk.

Once again the gaming public went wild, and even the office cleaners browsed the Lambourghini showrooms in between trips to Monte Carlo.

But the clock keeps turning friends, and it's almost a year since we were blessed for the second time with the gormless death-dodging tomfoolery.

Psygnosis – who in the meantime have employed an entirely new staff, since the "Lemming generation" have long since retired to luxury villas on the Algarve and Costa Brava – realised that the time was again right for the green-haired sheep clones to grace our TVs and monitors, and have duly obliged. The result is a full sequel, and sports the moniker Lemmings 2.

Of course there will be those sad few who don't know what Lemmings is all about, so I'll briefly explain. The basic idea is to ensure that X amount of Lemmings make their way safely from one end of a level to the other.

A major obstacle that stands in your way is the unshakeable fact that Lemmings are thick. They're stupid. They just haven't got a bloody clue mate – over cliffs, off tall blocks, they just cannot grasp the concept of death.

You must therefore steer the empty-headed rarely-seen mammals in the direction of safety, all the time making cunning use of what few talents they actually do possess, such as the abilities to jump and dig. There – now you know.

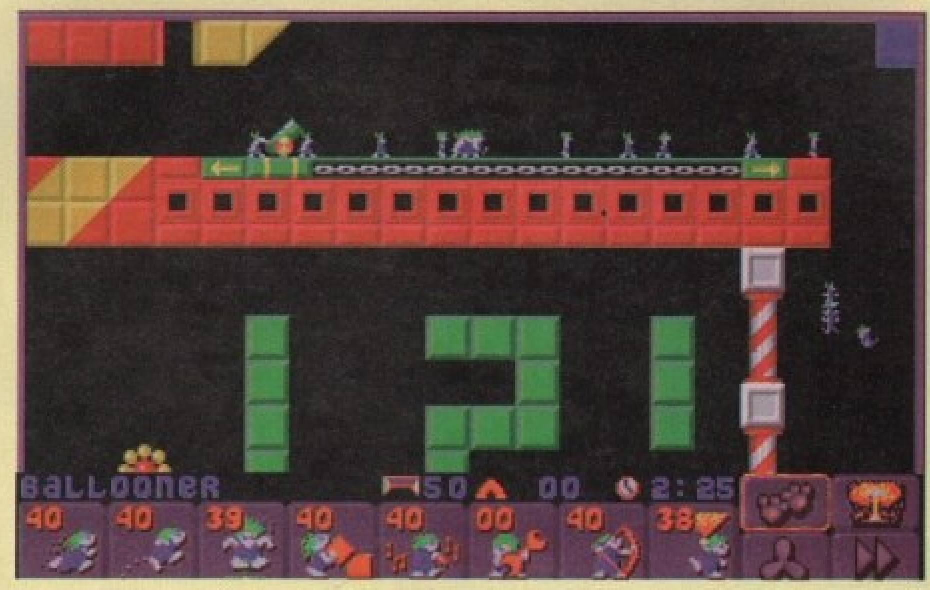
Anyway, Lemmings 2 is here, and whereas the prequels had us saving lemmings just for the sheer nobility of it all, we now have a plot.

The lemmings want to leave their island home, and must build a big vessel for the purpose. However, they can't leave without the fabled magic talisman, and as with most games nowadays it seems, the talisman is broken and the parts spread around the various levels just waiting to be collected.

Psygnosis have given their pets loads more skills this time, and depending on the situation the lems can jump, dig, float upwards on a balloon and even ski!

Although the sprites are the same size as ever, you'll see Beach Lemmings, Polar Lemmings, Space Lemmings and others, performing against even better backdrops than before.

Complete with the harder puzzles and funky tunes, Lemmings 2 seems set to be a massive hit on its release in the early New Year – and of course, the full and unexpurgated review will appear in all its glory in these very pages for your consumption.



Much more versatility allows your lems to jump, float, build and even fire arrows!



We're looking forward to it mate



For the more adventurous among you, skiing lessons are available at reasonable rates



Lemming Island. Can't see why they'd want to leave really. It's nicer than where I live

Straight from the morque's makeupdepartment comes

NICKY BOOM

MICROIDS ▪ £25.99 ▪ 1/2 meg ▪ Joystick ▪ Out now

Platform games are all very much alike, you know. Actually, you've probably worked this out for yourselves by now, haven't you?

Dashing madly through garish landscapes, jumping on strange creatures of varying size and nastiness to either save a loved one or to collect the bits of some all-important machine seems to be about the sum of most platform plots.

It doesn't stop them selling by the bucket-load though, so perhaps I should just stop moaning and get on with doing what I'm paid for.

Nicky Boom has jumped well and truly on to the bandwagon of dull plots (there I go again) as we are informed by the manual – though not in those exact words obviously.

Nicky is just your average six-year-old French boy, spending his days doing whatever French boys do (make your own lewd comments at this point).

But shock horror! Nicky's grandad has been kidnapped by a wicked witch who is keeping him locked in her dungeon until he spills the beans about the secrets of the Forest People, of whom he is custodian.

On hearing the news, Nicky immediately lets go of the kitten he was torturing and sets off into the (probably enchanted) forest to rescue the senior male patriarch of the Boom extended family unit. Why he didn't just didn't tell his dad I don't know, but anyway...



Now does this boy look the super hero type?

The usually friendly and cute forest beasties have been turned by the witch into her snarling protectors, so Nicky must – surprise surprise – jump on their heads to eliminate them. Sweets and cakes are littered around to give our hero extra strength, and bombs can be found from time to time.

On progressing through a number of the levels, I was surprised by the depth and skilful mapping of the game. There is actually quite a large, if simple, puzzle element to the whole affair that I found very addictive.

Sound FX are well above average – there's even what I think is some French sampled speech in there – and the ani- tion, while over-cute, is unarguably colou and detailed.

Nicky Boom is unlikely to be rememb as an all-time Amiga great, but having sa that, it does possess that certain addic and fun quality that many games in th genre lack.

Pa

VISION
Excellent colour and detail, but a little too cute.

AUDIO
Really nice tunes and plenty of sound FX.

PLAYABILITY
The complexity of the levels can lead to getting lost now and then.

ADDICTION
Nicky Boom was a pleasant surprise – one I'll come back to.

82%

Swahili crop rotation techniques.

TEARAWAY THOMAS

SOUNDWARE ▪ £25.99 ▪ 1/2 meg ▪ Joystick ▪ Out now

Keep in platform mood folks – at least for now – because it's time to meet a cute little British bulldog called Thomas. Well actually, he's not particularly cute – in fact to be brutally honest it seems as though this beast has chased at least half a dozen parked cars too many.

Um, come to think of it, the probability of Thomas being British is quite remote too, since Soundware are a German company and far more likely to plump for a native canine to fill any vacancies in the hero department than they are to employ a foreign mutt.

He is definitely a bulldog though – oh yes, a leg at each corner, a stumpy tail at the back, flabby jowls and a big "I am a bulldog" badge that effectively ends all speculation.

Now Thomas is running very fast

Having just complained at some length in the above review about the unoriginality of platform plots, you will excuse my lack of gushing enthusiasm as I briefly outline Tearaway Thomas. Are you ready? Here we go – you have to collect stuff and avoid/jump on things. Wow, eh?

The items Thomas must collect are diamonds, which have carelessly been scattered throughout tons of levels by a person or persons unknown. They're all over the blooming show – in trees, under bridges, and the more you collect, the more points you earn. Riveting stuff this, innit?

I'm a sarcastic old so and so, and to be fair Tearaway Thomas is actually quite a nifty little game. The fun begins in the woods near Thomas's home, with most of the all-important diamonds at first nestling tantalisingly in the branches of trees.

Strange and improbable though it may seem, bears inhabit the woods of this picturesque German forest, nasty big bears that will eat small bulldogs whole given half a chance

Well no – the truth is, the bears are of the variety that you might find in a child's bed, and the only nastiness they exude is the knack of making Thomas flash briefly and lose energy points should he encounter one of them.

The rest of the game is very much in the same vein, with cute creatures aplenty adorning brightly coloured cheerful backgrounds.

Tearaway Thomas might very well find itself in the large bunch of also-rans if it wasn't for one specific feature that lifts it above many – its speed. The sprite is one of the fastest moving I've seen, making the game far more enjoyable to play.

The cuteness of it all means that few gamers above the age of about ten or twelve will be impressed, but for the youngsters among you, Tearaway Thomas is a fun game along the lines of Doodle Bug.

Paul

VISION
Colourful and well presented.

AUDIO
Oh dear, this tune is in danger of driving me mad!

PLAYABILITY
Fast, but the jumping can prove a little awkward.

ADDICTION
Yes it's fun, but interest may wane sooner rather than later.

79%

Here today, gone tomato...

BILL'S TOMATO GAME

PSYGNOSIS ▪ £25.99 ▪ 1/2 meg ▪ Mouse ▪ Out now

Correct me, if I'm wrong, but I would think that this is the only Amiga computer game that has a vegetable as the hero. Before you write in, yes I know it's a fruit, but is anyone really bothered what the hell it is?

Bill's Tomato is a puzzle game, but it's nothing like Lemmings. The idea behind it is simple – you have to get your tomato from one side of the screen to another in the set time limit.

There's nothing I like better than a game I can instantly understand. It does sound so simple that you might think it's crap. Well, it's not, Bill's Tomato Game is one of the most challenging puzzle games I've ever played.

Your tomato starts off on a springboard and the idea is to get across to another platform situated on the other side of screen. There is a go/stop icon which amazingly starts and stops the process of your tomato being hurled.

The only problem is that the springboard throws your tomato straight up in the air, so there's no way the tomato is going to get to the other side unless some divine intervention is put into effect. The divine intervention comes in the form of fans, springy platforms, jack in the boxes and bricks.

As I said before the game is set against time, so your tomato will never die unless you don't complete the puzzle quickly enough. This enables you to test where your tomato lands, so you know where to put the objects to help him across.

Easy, huh? Nah mate, there are all manner of evil objects and beasts trying to stop you.



Blimey, the world's first trampolining tomato...

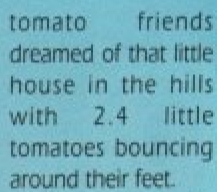
These range from annoying wise Japanese men to fire monsters.

Well, the game is so easy to explain that's all you really need to know. Unless you want the plot. Oh you do, that's good news because it's coming right up.

The story goes that our hero tomato dreamed of all things peaceful and quiet and spending the rest of his days as a wrinkly tomato with his beautiful girlfriend.

On the way to the dreaded greengrocers, our hero decides it's time to act and jumps with his girlfriend out of the van that was transporting them there.

Now without a care in the world, our tomato friends dreamed of that little house in the hills with 2.4 little tomatoes bouncing around their feet.



This is where disaster strikes. Mr Squirrel is overly fond of our red chums, spies our hero's girlfriend and decides to kidnap her. Our hero is now distressed and decides to wage war against Mr Squirrel.

So, off he sets up Mr Squirrel's tree to save his girlfriend. Will he succeed and be forever happy or will he get to the top of the tree and find that she's been made into a salad?

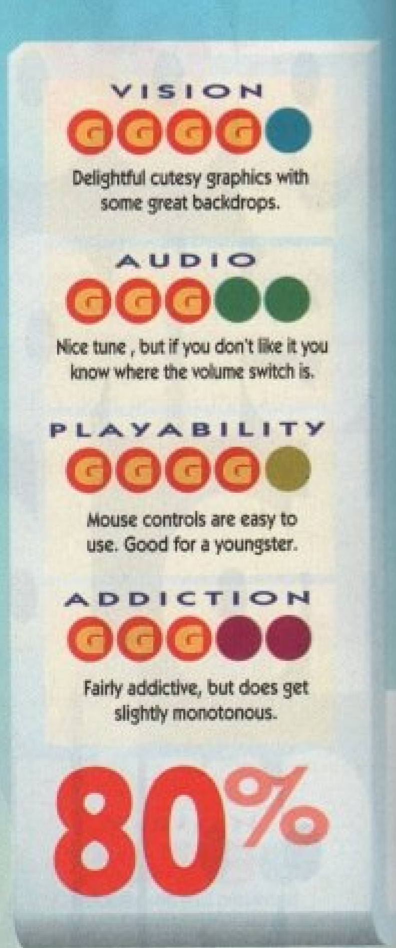
OK, so there's the plot. Oh stop laughing, it's not that unbelievable, well OK it is, but don't tell the tomatoes, you'll hurt their feelings.

So, is Bill's Tomato Game any good? Well, yes and no. Yes, because of the original idea, the great graphics and the delightful little tune. No, because after a while it does get a bit monotonous and a little boring.

If you're waiting for Lemmings 2 as your next puzzle game then I'd strongly recommend Bill's Tomato's as something to be getting on with. Ketch up on Bill's Tomato Game, it's a reet smart laff to while the hours away.

Jonathan

First level and time to get down to some vegetable/fruit fun





Ah, wise old man tell me the secret of the tomato...

Splat!

Ah, move over tomato and let Jimi take over



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VISA

When we learned that the kindly Gremlin person was to pay us a visit last week, a wave of anticipation swept through the office.

We'd been looking forward to the arrival of the much talked about Nigel Mansell World Championship for weeks, and since I had long since scheduled myself to review it I was delighted at the prospect of a Friday afternoon swerving round the circuits and generally being a right pain in the aerofoil.

Somebody asked if he was bringing "that football management game" as well.

I replied, uninterested, " Uh, yeah... I suppose so" – and promptly returned to that small place in my mind where I had already begun tuning my Williams.

Well, Gremlin Man duly arrived and I could literally smell the fumes from that ultra-powered engine as he neared the Gamer hovel – he swore blind it wasn't his after-shave With the Mansell box nestling ingly under his arm we exchanged gre ings, and then before I knew what happening he hit me with the bombs "All right, shall we have a look at Prem Manager first then?"

What? Premier who? Was this some of joke? Now, I'm happy to look at about any computer game – it's my after all – but when you have a mas licence thrill-'em-up such as Nigel Mansel your disposal, a football management ga starts to look a bit poxy.

There was nothing for it – Biff was pr cilled in for this one, so over he came to talked through it, while I perched imp tiently beside him.

Up to four players can take part, w learned, and I was invited to join in this itable managerial feast.

This was at eleven o'clock. Six hou later, long after Gremlin Man had dis

Famous footballing quotes no. 78 – Tommy Docherty: "Well I didn't know she was your wife!"

PREMIER MANAGER

GREMLIN ▪ £25.99 ▪ 1 meg ▪ Mouse ▪ Out now





OPERATION SCREEN
This is the main screen, from which all the major features of the game are controlled. Finance, club staff, transfer markets, player profiles, league tables and more are a accessed from this point.



TEAM

OK, so we're Wycombe Wanderers, and here is the motley crew that constitutes our team. A team is ranked through five varying levels of fair, good, very good and superb, and through world class, exceptional and finally The Ultimate.

As you can see, we've got a long way to go – think we'd better check out the transfer market.



FINANCE

Before we can splash out on any new players, it might be an idea to consult our finances. It might look like a lot of money – but good players don't come cheap, and wages, bills and ground repairs won't take care of themselves either.

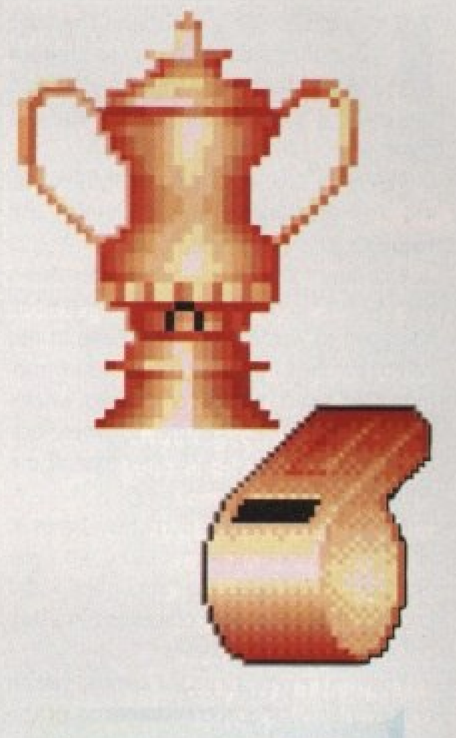
Loans are available, but interest rates are high, so be warned.



TRANSFER MARKET

Having kidded ourselves that we can afford to spend, it's time to see just what's for sale. All team details are correct to within a few months, and there are plenty of famous names up for grabs.

By clicking on the magnifying glass icon more detailed information – and the asking price, gulp! – can be learned.



peared and Biff was arranging his lift home, I was still doggedly guiding the mighty Wycombe Wanderers through the league and cups – bladder full, lunch uneaten, and Nigel Mansell discarded and untouched.

Needless to say, some hectic workload juggling and rapid arm-twisting – not to mention bribing – took place in order that I could review this masterpiece, and thus further my excuse for playing it lots more.

I understand that Mansell has now been opened and will be reviewed by someone or other in this issue, but frankly I just don't care anymore... I'm in love.

Let's just clear one thing up before we go on. If this were a review of computerised chess, and you couldn't play, it wouldn't hold too much interest for you would it?

Similarly, those who loathe football are unlikely to be swayed by even my enthusiastic persuasiveness – but hey – read on... you never know.

You begin your career as the manager of a GM Vauxhall Conference League team – the choice of exactly which is yours – and the basic aim is to achieve as much success as possible from your humble beginnings, hoping eventually to become Premier League champs and maybe even win the European Cup.

Not only will you utilise all of your mighty managerial skills, but a goodly amount of business acumen is required too, in order to ensure the overall stability of the club.

Premier Manager has got so many features that I really don't know where to start, so look at the boxes littered around this page for a run-down of the game's various features. This isn't all of it by any means - I haven't even touched upon the cup competitions or injuries or... I could go on.

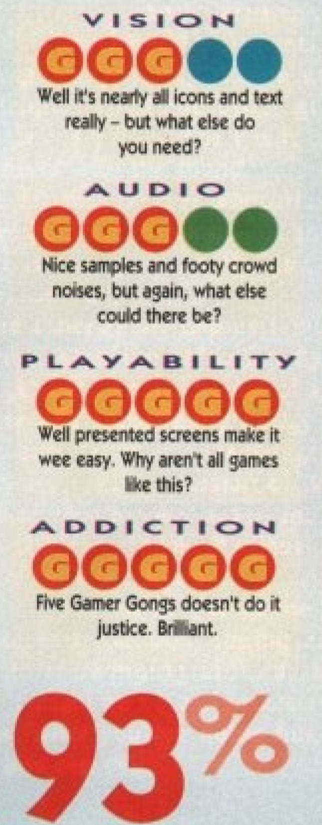
Most people who do follow football are likely to support a league team, and may be disappointed that they can't jump straight into the game as Liverpool or Man United.

In fact the only way in which you can change clubs is by being offered a new position at the end of a season – obviously dependent upon how well you fared. This doesn't detract from the game in any way, and if anything only makes the whole thing more realistic – let's face it – Liverpool versus Stalybridge Celtic in the Conference league isn't really likely, is it?

If you are a fan of this kind of thing, or have been disappointed by previous attempts – indeed even if you are an Eskimo hermit living on a glacier above a Norwegian hamlet with no access to electricity – buy this game.

Buy it, buy it, buy it. I love Premier Manager so much I want to have its babies.

Paul



SPONSORSHIP

This is the most frequent and lucrative form of income available. Companies will be queuing up to sponsor you at the beginning of the season (even the odd quality magazine!) but a string of poor results will soon see the support drop.

Check for new sponsors after every couple of matches.



OPPOSITION

Once you have made sure your team is training hard, you're almost ready to play the first match. Have a look at the opposing team first – they're ranked in the same way as your own team – and set your formation and playing style according to your strengths and their weaknesses. This should be a walkover!



THE MATCH!

Yes, I know the game screen is small, but it's the result that matters. The match can be played at six speeds; the slowest is about 1/4 real time, the fastest about 30 seconds.

The name of the player currently on the ball is displayed, as are those of the scorers. Substitutions can be made at any time and – oh... I've lost.



TRAINING

You could be forgiven for thinking that you had a team of slackers after that performance! Phone the coach to ensure your players are being properly trained.

All players can train to either shoot, tackle, pass or handle (advisable for goalies only!). On returning from injury, a player will not train until instructed to do so – keep a check.



LEAGUE TABLES

Hang about – what's all this? We're in Division 1! Well, I did tell you I spent a lot of time on this game. It's all very well being in Division 1, but a look at my finances at this stage would show a balance that's £7 million in the red.

Excuse me while I go and sort it out. Oh by the way, Gremlin Cheat 1 is just my nickname – honest.

It's nice to see a company that has thought of a different way to produce a sequel to a game instead of adding the usual III's after the name of the old game.

Millenium have done a bit of lateral thinking and produced Aquatic Games, the sequel to the classic James Pond.

Old James is a bit knackered after doing this spy lark, so he decides to go get a bit of relaxation in. But there will be none of this namby-pamby lying around on a beach rubbish. Old James wants some good wholesome exercise – sad but true. So where better to get the exercise he's after than at the Aquatic Games?

For some reason you don't play James in all of these events. It isn't stressed who you are but it's not really that important – all I know is that all of the competitors are supposed to be friends of James.

The first event is just a sprint, which entails the usual obscene waggling of the joystick, but you are not running on a track – that's much too easy.

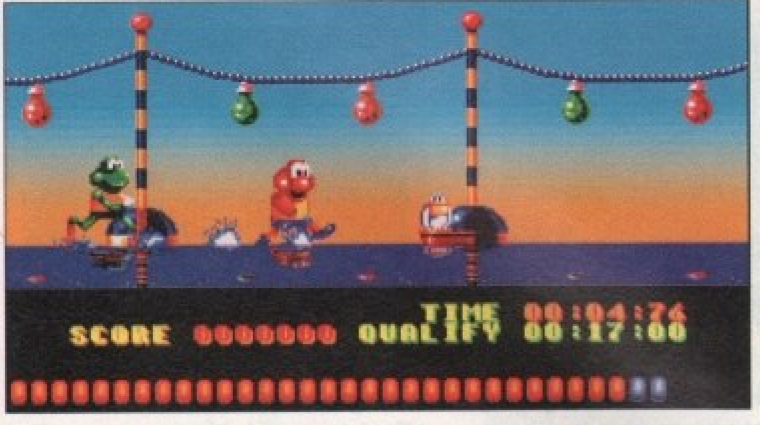
For the most part of the race you are running on water so if you slow down you will sink. You are racing against a frog who is pretty speedy.

Event two – Feeding time. You play a tubby character standing on a bridge, and you have to fill up your bucket and feed the fish that poke their head out of the water.

Next up is the Grass Race. A friend of old Jimmy's is a unicycling shark – everybody should have a unicycling shark for a friend, but alas we don't.

You have to pedal his unicycle along the course and jump over all the different obstacles that stand in your way. The course runs from left to right, like the sprint but it has lots of hills and things that you've got to pedal up.

I found the control method on this a bit tricky. It's like trying to rub your stomach while patting your head. You have to pull

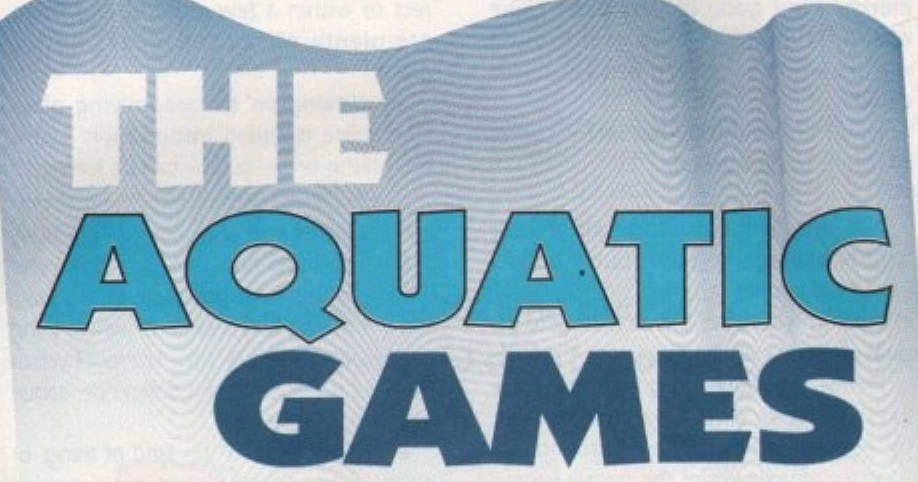


Just what does James think he is doing this walking on water stuff?

£25.99 ▪ MILLENIUM ▪ 1/2 meg ▪ Joystick ▪ Out now

THE AQUATIC GAMES

Squelchy Pursuits



Shell catching... very relaxing



Sponge frolics abound

Be careful on the sponges

Feed the fish to keep 'em down. All very surreal

the joystick round in a clockwise fashion – thats fine until you have to jump over an obstacle, when it's a bit tricky too keep the momentum going.

Reading the list of the various events will make you think that they're pretty weird – you'd be right. After the Grass Race you have Kipper Watching which is almost as bizarre as it sounds. You are in charge of six seals who are having a kip (a nap to our southern friends).

The rowdy beach people keep throwing beach balls at our comatose friends so to stop them waking you have to jump up and deflect the balls away with your head in true seal style.

Along with the 100-metre splash there are a couple of adaptations to normal events like Leapfrog which is just a version of the 110-metre hurdle.

There is also a trampoline (sea sponge) section of the games, the first I have ever seen. You have to go through all the set pieces like a proper trampolinist. Once you have done the set moves in the time given any extra somersaults you do give you extra points.

By far the trickiest game in the tournament is the shell shooting section. Odd-looking crabs come at you from either side of the screen, and you score points by flipping and catching them, flipping them into vats of hot oil or shopping them to burst the overhead balloons. I always seem to get electrocuted by the electric eel-type things.

I liked the Aquatic Games a lot – graphically they're sound and the FX are quite amusing in places. It's a nice change from run-of-the-mill sports games.

I also thought that the practice options were a hell of a lot better than normal. Instead of the usual one practice mode there are three on different levels, so if you're a real slowy like me you can go on the thicky level first. Well thought out and good fun.

Ben





Monster Mash – Walker gets a stuffing

Star Wars flashback

WALKER



Stuffed again, by the little guys on the floor

A hearty slap on the back is deserved by Psygnosis for this one I think. After their recent run of turkeys this one looks like is could be the one to break the deadlock.

How many of you readers out there aged between 17 and 18 collected Star Wars figures in your youth? Quite a few I would expect, and if you really saved up you pocket money you could get the Millenium Falcon or a Scout Walker.

If you are either too old or too young to have had Star Wars figures then you are bound to have seen Return of the Jedi, the last instalment of the Star Wars trilogy. On this film appeared Scout Walkers, large ungainly machines which walked on two legs and took a two-man crew.

This Scout Walker and the subject of Psygnosis's new game have rather an uncanny resemblance. But Biffa and I are not bothered what the game looks like in relation to other things.

On screen, Walker is a lateral scrolling shoot-'em-up stroke strategy game, a simple, get-to-the-end-of-the-level-and-kill-the-big-guy sort of thing.

You, being the single-man crew, have to get to the end by guiding your machine with a simple left to right movement and using the mouse to aim your gun.

It's a bit of a tricky control method at first but it's challenging instead of irritating. Also it quite fun having one person on the controls and one on the guns – a bit less challenging but you can enjoy the carnage more.

Walker is also another poke in the eye for the myth that says you must have good graphics for a good game. While being graphically sound as far as the background and the Walker itself go, the graphics are a fair and smooth representation of the programmer's idea. The enemy troop, however, are nothing more than badly-drawn lemmings, if that. But they are well animated, and they certainly do the job of doing you in.

Granny Smith drives to the shops

They run at you with admirable stupidity and chuck grenades in your general direction.

Some of them fly helicopters, some of them even climb up the back of your machine and plant bombs. Not satisfied with grenades they fly helicopters, drive lorries, bombers and various other mechanical armaments.

Graphically the animation on the helicopters and the other ground vehicles is pretty but I was really impressed with the sound. When your guns overheat there is wonderful sample of predator when one of the soldiers is firing an empty gun (you smart sod – Ed).

The other really impressive bit of sound is when the helicopters fly on – you get the sampled sound of a helicopter and some really dodgy funk music banging away in the background.

On the finished version of Walker you'll be able to view out of the cockpit of the Walker while it is moving, as well as the side view.

I'm not sure what the point of this will be – seeing as the head is swinging around all the time it might be a bit of problem looking at what you are doing but, let's wait and see.

When the full version of Walker hits the streets it should be a stonker and it shouldn't be too far off.

Ben

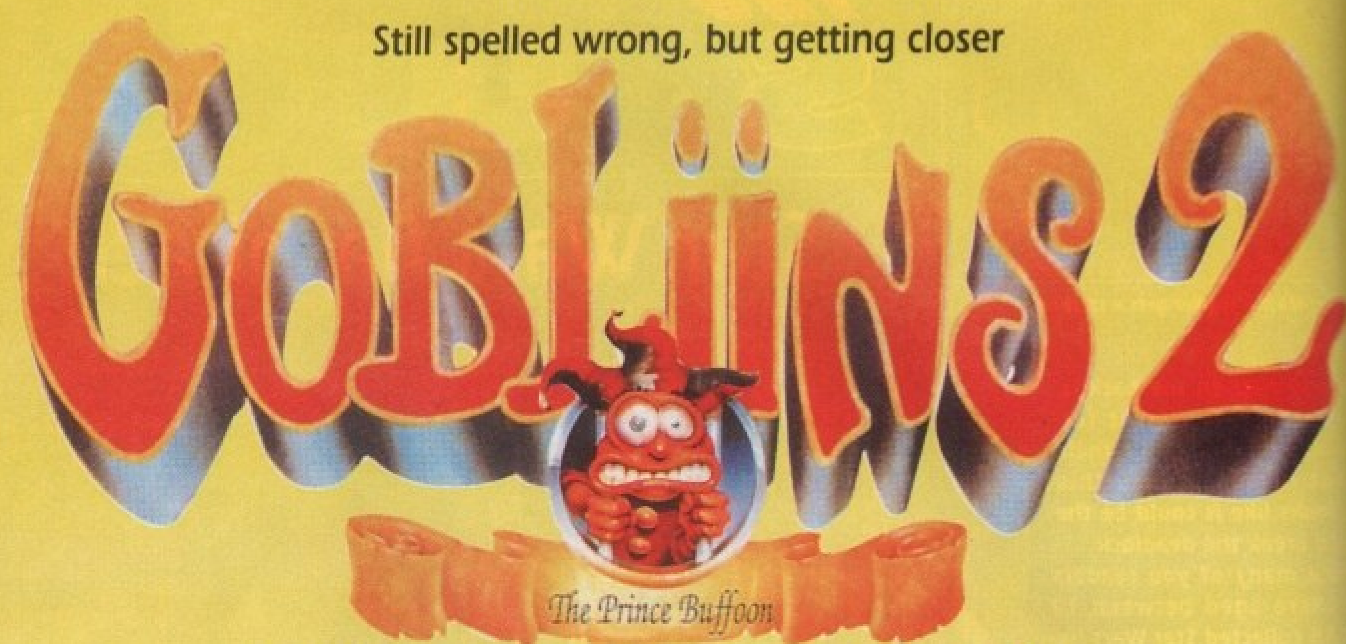


Big guns, lorries, and bomber planes, they really don't like this Walker guy



The winter evenings will fly by

Still spelled wrong, but getting closer



Gobliins 2

COKTEL VISION ▪ £29.99 ▪ 1 meg ▪ Mouse ▪ Out now

No, I'm not going to mention the spelling – dubious though it is – or aim any cheap puns at the French developers who ought to have spent a little more time poring over their English dictionaries, especially since they made a similar mistake last time with the original Gobliins.

I'm not going to do that at all; but if I was going to, I'd say this – the spelling is ridiculous and our cross-Channel cousins are completely daft.

It's not long since we reviewed Gobliins, but already those industrious bods at Coktel Vision have come up with yet another adventure for our erstwhile elfen friends.

At least this is what one would assume. On closer inspection though, it transpires that two altogether new Gobliins (no letters about the spelling please – it's all correct, I assure you) have replaced the original three.

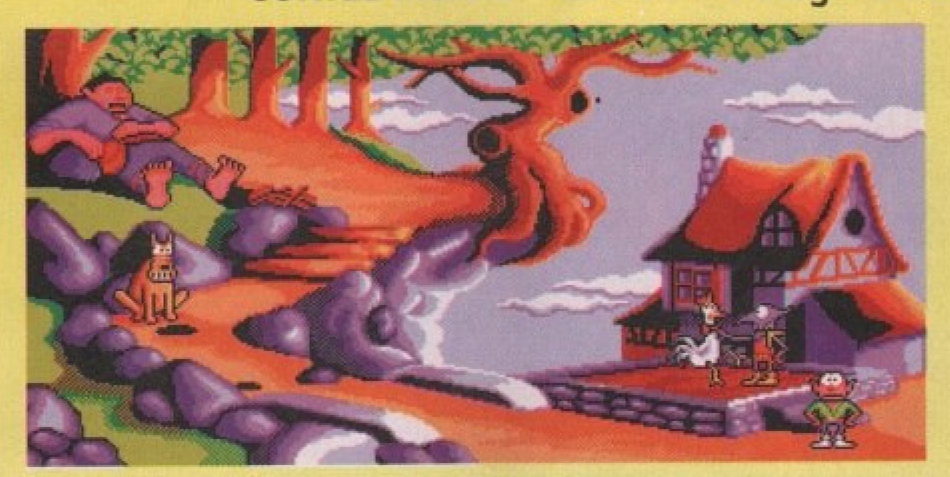
This makes Gobliins 2 a sequel something along the lines of that fabled movie Grease 2, whereby an already dubious storyline was minutely changed and similar characters introduced in order to milk the profits even further.

The king Goblin (let's just dispense with the silly spelling for now, eh?) has had his son kidnapped by the nasty and evil Amoniak, who's still narked off over being defeated in a battle by the king some 50 years earlier.

To complete the king's humiliation, Amoniak has made the king's son his jester, and although new to the job the now Prince Buffoon is said to be already challenging such comic legends as Shane Ritchie and Andrew O'Connor for the title of funniest man in the world.

This is all well and good, but the king would rather like his son back, so he can once again engage in the customary royal duties of wearing maroon pantaloons and having his friends beheaded for beating him at hopscotch.

A problem is the fact that Amoniak has



Who said video games didn't incite violent tendencies?

about four million ferocious beasts protecting himself and the prince at all times.

Of course the only people stupid enough to attempt the unlikely rescue are a couple of dedicated Goblins, Winkle and Fingus.

Winkle fancies himself as something of a card – he's a cheeky young fella and tends to get a good drubbing at some point from just about everybody he encounters.

Fingus is the gentleman of the two – a kind of Sid Little to Winkle's Eddie Large if you like, the difference being Fingus doesn't attempt to play a guitar only to be disturbed by Winkle's comedy banter, as was the ilk the with aforementioned duo. But enough of these comedianic allegories, and onto the game.

Those who have played the original will be familiar with the gameplay, but will probably be thankful that this sequel sports one less sprite, and is therefore less fiddly to control.

Since the whole point is to rescue the dippy prince, who as mentioned is under extremely heavy guard, most of the game involves overcoming various guardians in finding your way to his captor.

The goblins must work together to solve the puzzles – in a specific order in some cases – and although frustrating at times, there are loads of humorous asides that take away some of that "Aarrgghh!..." element that quite often causes serious malfunctions in machinery due to its being repeatedly bludgeoned by a variation of heavy hou[sehold] implements.

Despite their being two characters [to] manipulate, the point-and-click contro[l] very user friendly. A nice touch I found w[as] the Notepad option which allows you t[o] record any pieces of pertinent information.

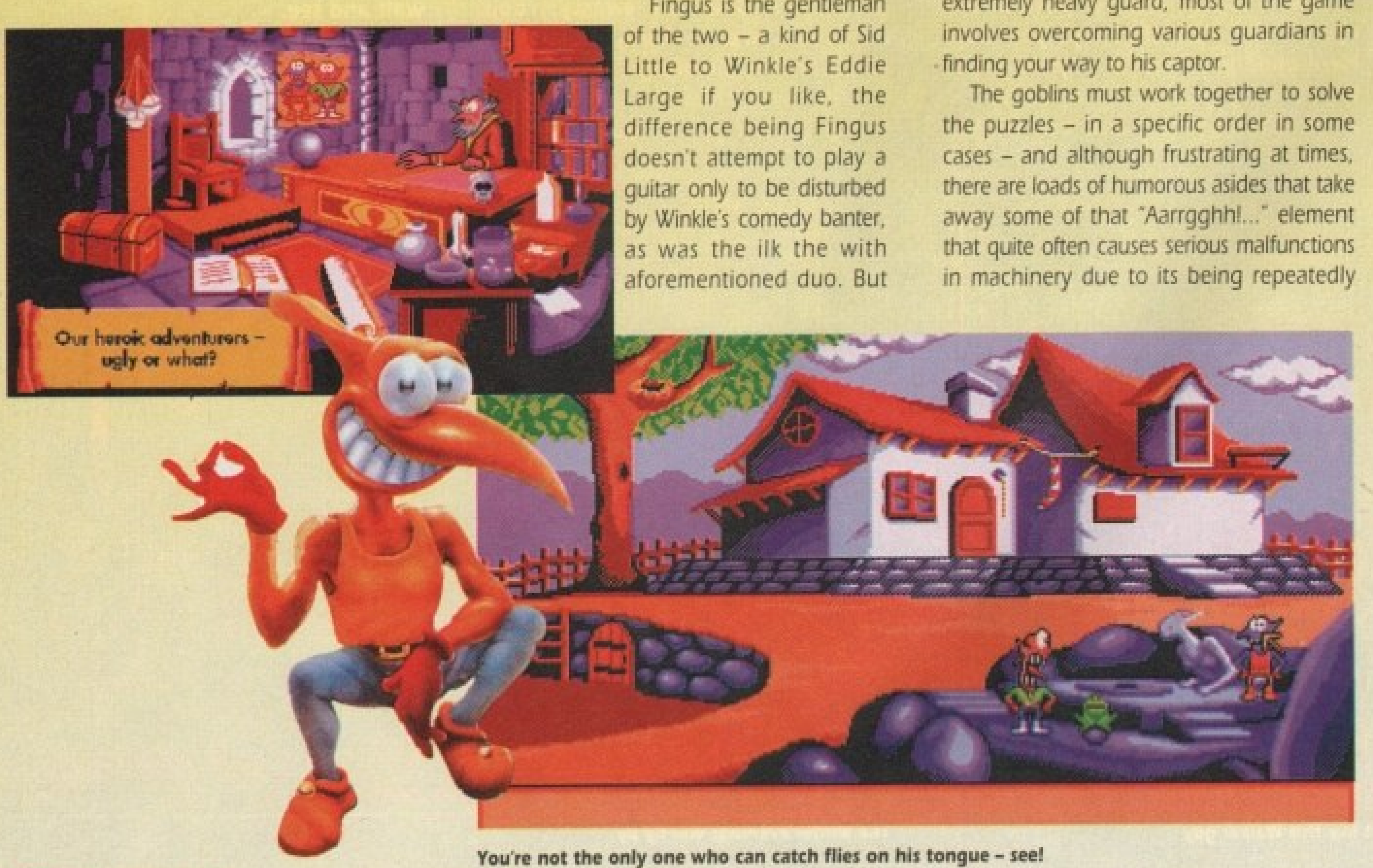
An irksome feature that occurs in a go[od] many games of this nature is that some [of] the puzzles are quite bizarre and not at a[ll] logical, and Gobliins 2 is no exception.

Thankfully the superb cartoon graphic[s] and funny FX (not the music mind – turn [it] off for God's sake) more than compensate.

Hardened adventurers are unlikely t[o] sustain major brain damage in attempting to complete the game, though the jollity [of] it all will more than satisfy.

In short, Gobliins 2 is a hilarious adven[-]ture that will provide a good few hours [of] chuckles and hair-pulls for just about an[y] game fan.

Pau[l]

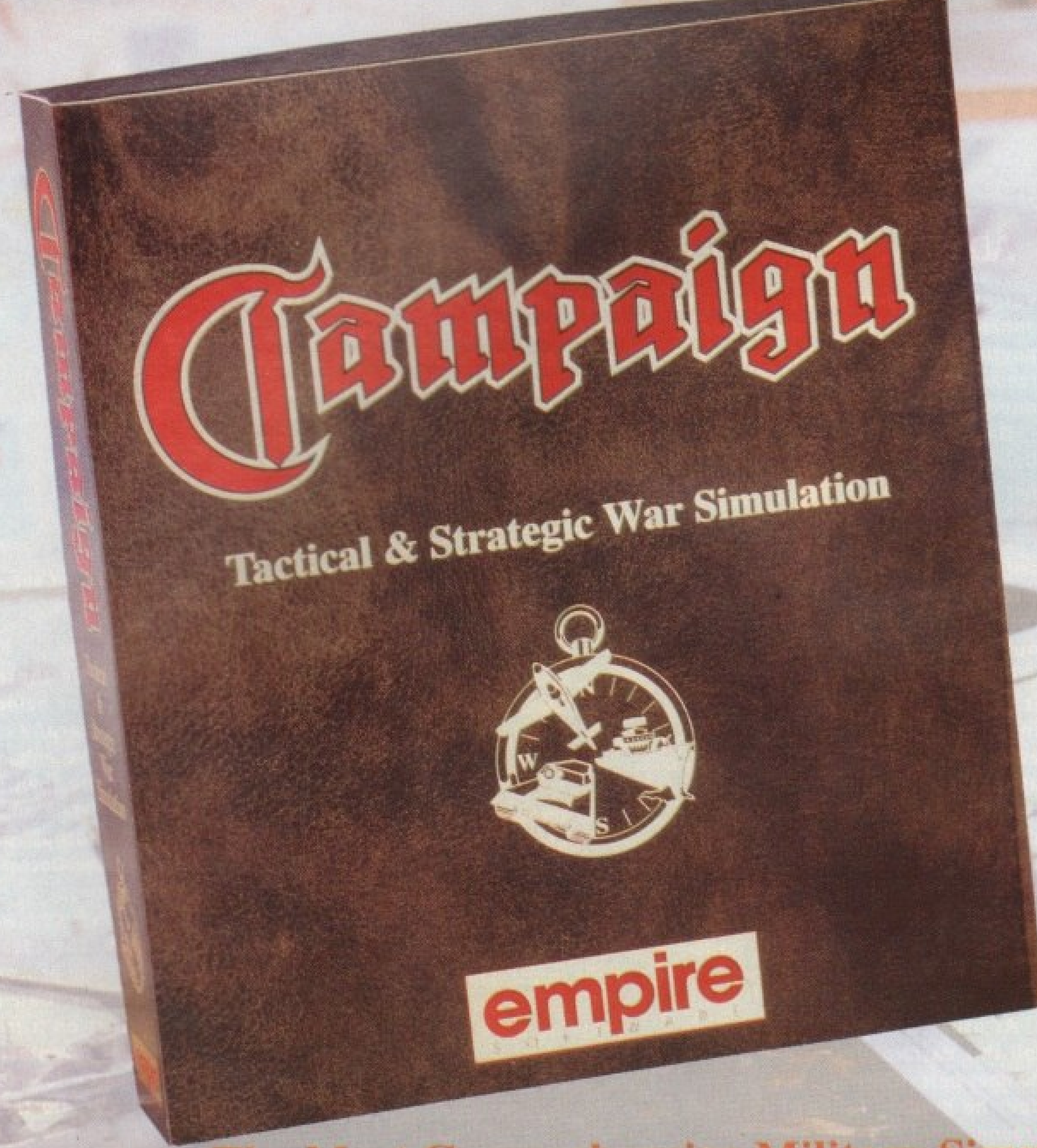


Our heroic adventurers – ugly or what?

You're not the only one who can catch flies on his tongue – see!



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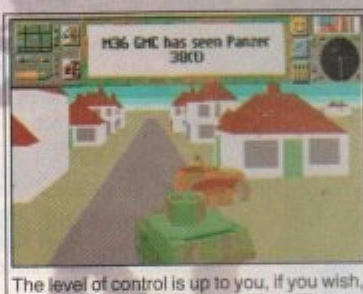
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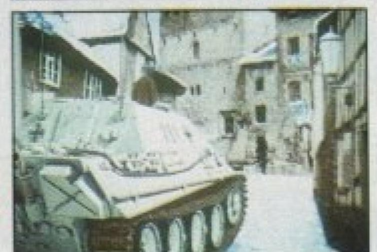
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Programmed by Jonathan Griffiths

The Doctor. Must. Beee. Exterminateeeed!

DALEK ATTACK

ADMIRAL ▪ £16.99 ▪ 1 meg ▪ Joystick ▪ Out now

Steve Wright. In the afternoon is protected under copyright – nineteen ninetee twoo... LEAVE IIIT!!

Unless you tune in to Radio One between three and six on weekdays you could be forgiven for believing that the cheap but cheerful adversaries of Doctor Who had dropped off the face of the planet.

Call it sentimentality, call it a cheap way of filling air time, but all things Who-like are going through something of a comeback at the moment.

Re-runs of the old Doctor Who series are popping up not only on UK Gold, which will readily show any old pap, but also on the rather more credible terrestrial outlet, BBC2.

And now, to top it all, Admiral software – little brother of education and budget specialists Alternative – are releasing for our delectation the game of the favourite foe, Dalek Attack.

I remember when I was about four or five years old and Jon Pertwee was our erstwhile do-gooder from the planet Gallefry. We got a coloured television aroundthis time.

It took my mum about three weeks to peel me from the living room ceiling after I discovered for the first time that the monsters weren't all black and white after all. Potty training was set back months, I'm telling you.

Like all Doctor Who fans, I was enthralled by the scary and futuristic-looking Daleks (this was around 1974 remember), but even at this tender age was a little confused as to how these robotic wash tubs could navigate a terrain full of potholes and contours on wheels the size of ha'pennies. Despite their dodgy synthesised voices and point blank refusal to adhere to even the simplest laws of physics though, the Daleks were, and remain the favourite and most recognised of all the Doctor's adversaries.

Davros, the Dalek leader and part-time kebab shop proprietor, has wheeled himself out of retirement once again for yet more outer-planetary evil. Well actually it's more like inner-planetary evil, because he's attempting to destroy the earth's ozone layer with the help of his evil minions.

This is Skaro – or is it Tokyo? Well anyway, that's a spaceship. Or maybe a satellite

Somebody should have told him that the job's already been taken – most of the population are undertaking it on a voluntary part-time basis – but anyway, that's what he's doing, and he's happy, bless him.

As usual, it's up to the Doctor to foil this dastardly plan, doing what he does best, which is... er, just what does he do exactly, apart from run around forbidding landscapes with an assortment of hapless assistants, that is? Well anyway, let's just say the Doctor must foil his plans, and leave it at that.

Dalek Attack is a five-level multi-scrolling shoot-'em-up. Oops – no, stop right there – it isn't a shoot-'em-up at all, because if memory serves me correctly, Doctor Who is a pacifist.

It's a sonic screwdriver-'em-up, this implement being the trusty tool that the Doctor is never without. Having said that, one blast from his screwdriver and the baddies certainly look dead to me – maybe they're just mildly concussed and suffer no serious after effects. Oh who cares?

As I was saying before I so rudely interrupted myself, the game is set over five levels – beginning in London, we travel through Paris, Tokyo and New York before finally arriving on Skaro, home planet of Davros.

Each level is very large, and the whole game is quite a challenge from the start. Nothing much new to report in the gameplay area – dispose of the nasties (a large proportion of which are obviously Daleks) in traditional fashion, picking up bonuses and other useful items as you go.

The Doctor himself is a very versatile chap – jumping from buildings, hanging off ledges and scaling walls – poor old Sylvester McCoy would turn in the grave his career was buried in if faced with challenges such as these.

Speaking of Sly, he's one of the three Doctors you can choose to be – the others being Tom Baker (complete with daft scarf) and Patrick Troughton. In two-player mode you even have a choice of which assistant you want to take, although thankfully Bonnie Langford isn't included. Good God – it'll be Lionel Blair as the Doctor next.



Dodgy character this one – kept winking at me he did!

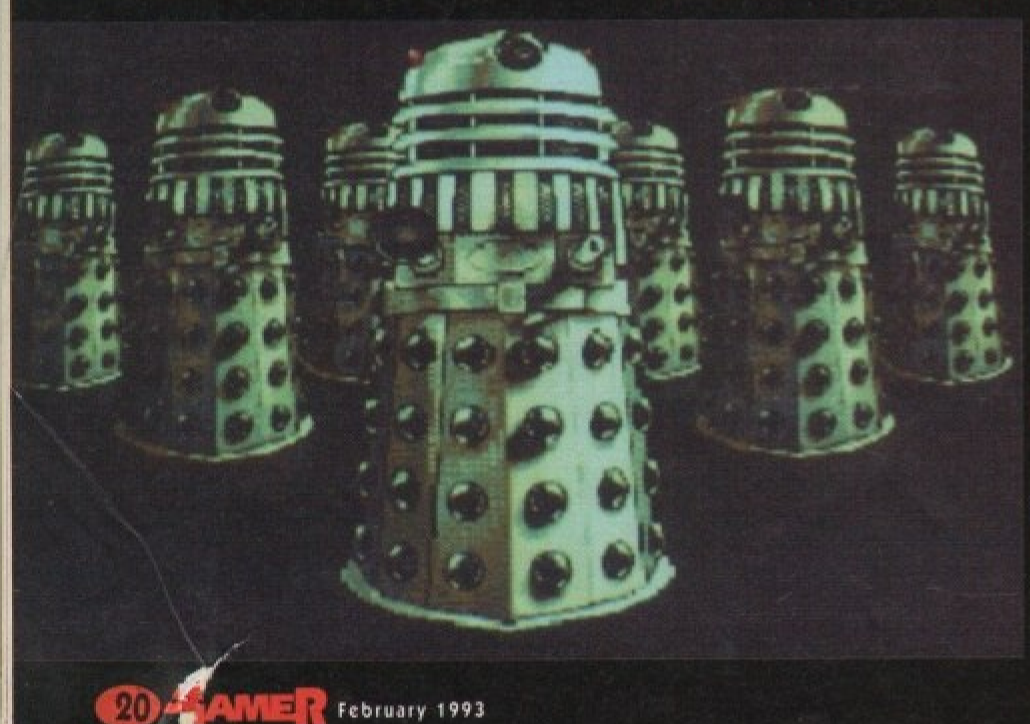
There will be those who critici the graphics for being flat. It's tru that a few parallax background could only have enhanced the gam but I was more than impressed wi the level of detail, and the realism the city backdrops, particularly th part where the Doctor gets flatten by a New York yellow cab.

It's not often we mention price ta in a review, the idea being that a game either will or won't stand up on its own merits. Dalek Attack is an original twist on a tried and teste formula – at seventeen quid it's outstanding value for money, an absolute must for all Doctor Who fans.

Paul



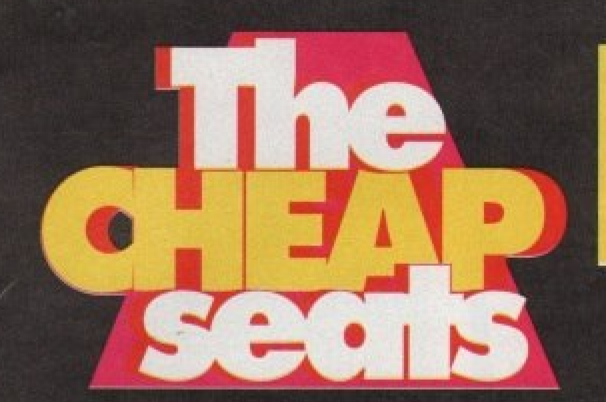
In typical NY fashion, the Doctor is assaulted by a flying crack head



Excuse me for asking, but we're your new neighbours. You don't have a spare sink plunger do you?




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STAR PERFORMERS



Jingle bells, Jingle bells, Jingle all the way. It's Christmas and it's time to spend some serious money, but if you fancy keeping those moths in your wallet a little longer, here's a whole plethora of budgets, you old misers

Ben's selection



Battle Hawks

Kixx XL • £12.99

Just when you thought that the old war ghosts had laid down and died, along comes another dodgy war game to dredge them all up again. Not only that but it's got one of the most ridiculous copy protections ever.

It's a flight simulation in which you can fly in famous battles, so if you like the old war games then this one is for you. Looking at the manual you would think this is history lesson rather than a game.

It goes into great detail about all of the planes used in the great battles of the Second World War. But it doesn't stop at the manual – it goes right though all the game.

First you have to choose which plane you are going to fly. There's a pretty awesome collection, and not just the English and American planes – there are a couple of Japanese ones too. Then choose the mission, whether it be dive bombing or torpedoing, and tally ho.

One of the best aspects of this game is the mouse control of the plane. Usually the mouse is way too responsive for the plane but Kixx seem to have got it right on the head. The rest of the controls are good too – not too many for the game to get ridiculous and not too few for it to lose depth. The screen updates quite fast too which was a nice surprise, even thought the graphics aren't particularly stunning. For war game fans exclusively.



75%

Prince of Persia

Hit Sqaud • £7.99

This is one game that gives other computer owners a swift sharp poke in the eye with a pointy stick. Graphically Prince of Persia is brill, with extremely smooth scrolling.

So it's Persia, the Sultan has done a bunk and is fighting some war somewhere and the Grand Vizier Jaffar has taken over and is exploiting the people to an enormous degree.

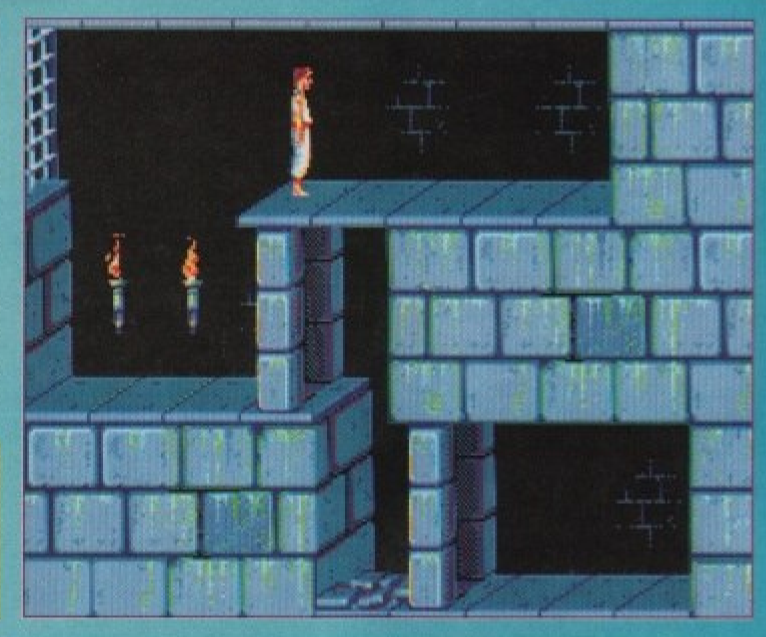
So enough about where I work, what about the game? You have to rescue the princess from where she is imprisoned, destined to marry Jaffar.

It's a very platform-oriented game but don't let that put you off if you aren't really a fan of platform games. You begin your quest in the middle of the castle. You are unarmed so the first thing to do is find a sword. For the most part it's a case of running around and jumping. But you have to be really careful because there are a lot of unsafe floor tiles – some of them open up new rooms to explore and some of them will dump you on huge spikes.

So let's say you've got the sword. Now you can start chopping little bits off people. Most of the baddies you encounter are pretty easy to dispatch when you've got the sword and there are only a couple of moves to master. Prince of Persia would be a pretty nondescript game if it weren't for the graphics, which make it a good buy.



78%





Trivial Pursuit

Hit squad • £7.99

I have to say that, as a rule, I would much rather play a board game than a computer game. It may make me look like a boring old fart, but there it is.

To persuade people like me to play their poxy computer games, software houses have started producing board games on computers. Well I don't care, I won't play.

Foremost of these compu-board games is Trivial Pursuits. A classic game up there with Monopoly, Cluedo and Snakes and Ladders – but does it work?

Well I will tell you now that there is a fair difference between this and the normal board version. Instead of using dice the game uses darts to determine a random score. When you move your piece the places you can move to are highlighted.

One thing I really liked about the game is that you can set a time limit – something which is lacking on the board game.

There is a question master called TP – an annoying little bloke but he does the job. I'm miserable, 'cos I prefer the board game, but it is a fair conversion.

70%



Switchblade

GBH Gold ■ £9.99

This sequel to the classic Switchblade was drooled all over by the computer press and is still just as sexy today as it was way back then.

The story goes like this. Havoc has been living up to his name and has decided to take over control of the Cyberworld. The only person who can possibly save the world is a Blade Knight and it just so happens that a chap called Hiro is the only living Blade Knight in the whole world. And guess what? He lives just around the corner from Havoc.

Cue platform romparama which involves our Japanese hero kicking some robot and other such nasties until he gets to wreck Havoc's deadly plans.



One of the best platformers you're ever likely to see – it's certainly on my top five list of platform games.

The graphics and sound are brilliant plus the level of playability is simply stunning. The game is a right toughy to complete – believe you me, it will take you more than a couple of goes to finish it.

Some things do improve with age and Switchblade 2 is one of them. Absolutely bloody brilliant.

Supercars

GBH Gold ■ £9.99

Are you still sadly mourning the disappearance of Nigel Mansell from Formula One Grand Prix racing? Are you weeping because that nasty Ayrton Senna rammed our Nige in the last race of the season?

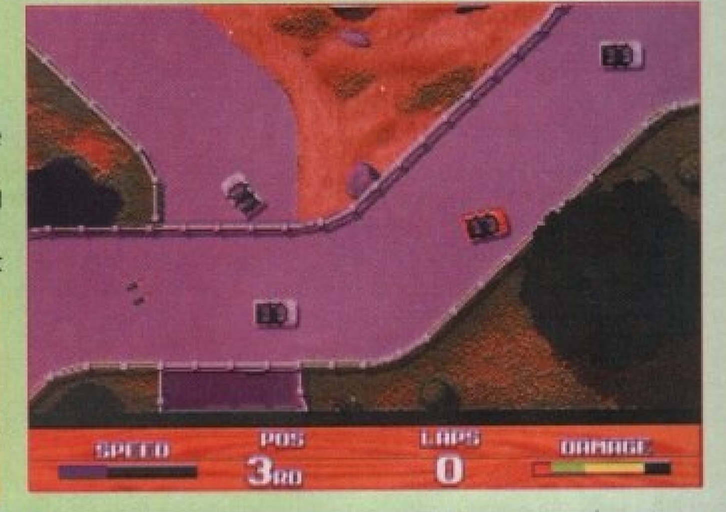
Are you crying because Nigel is going to make millions while driving for Paul Newman and will be that rich that he will be able to fill up his swimming pool with champagne and use £50 notes as toilet paper?

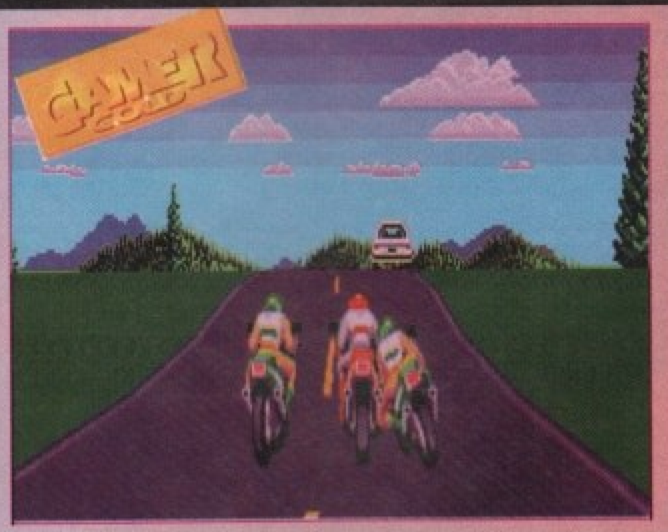
Well are you? Do you need a nice little budget racing game to take your frustration out on? If you answered "yes" then with a bit of luck... here's Supercars 2.

Instead of just simply racing around the track, you can also blow up other competitors using various violent weapons. Good fun, eh? Supercars was the original game and there are loads of differences between Supercars 2 and its predecessor. One is the graphics which are a lot smaller, but are more detailed.

Personally I don't think it's as playable as the original. You tend to concentrate on killing your opponent rather than winning the race. Apart from that, Supercars is a really good car game and is well worth buying. it's good, but not that good!







RVF Honda

Kixx ■ £9.99

I lost my sacred copy of RVF Honda about two years ago, so imagine the smile on my face when it arrived in the office last week. Yes, it's been re-released on the Kixx budget label and I'm as happy as Larry.

RVF Honda is one of my all-time favourite games. I think it's because when I asked my parents for a motorbike they said "No", so I sobbed for a bit and then found RVF Honda at my local computer games store and it cheered me up no end.

I raced around some of the greatest tracks in the world, gasping for breath as I went around corners and screaming as I was flung from my bike crashing into a tree due to oil spillage on the track.

All my emotions and senses were being put into overdrive. It has great graphics, good sound, but it is as playable as something that is so playable it's banned. Addiction-wise you couldn't go far wrong – it certainly kept me entertained for weeks and weeks.

RVF Honda is brilliant and for only a tenner you'd be a complete fool not to buy it.



Midwinter

Kixx XL ■ £12.99

Cor lumme Mr Watts, if it isn't Midwinter. Now here is a game that I've heard a lot about, but never actually played. Until now that is.

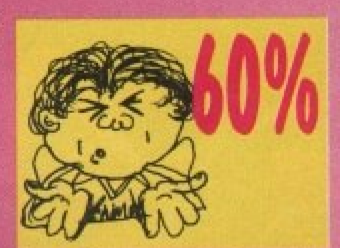
Midwinter is essentially a strategy game, but it does have some elements of action lumped into it.

You play the role of John Stark and you have to travel across the icy wastes getting together a team of crack commandos to destroy the evil enemy.

Who the evil enemy is I haven't a clue, because somebody has lost the manual. You get the idea though, good against evil and good has to save the world.

The action bits are presented in a 3D polygon-style – if any of you have seen the 3D Construction Kit you'll know what I mean. Unfortunately the game is showing its age. It does hold your interest for a couple of hours and then it tends to get a bit monotonous and boring.

If you like this type of game then you'll already have Midwinter. One interesting thing is the price. Midwinter will cost you £12.99 – £3 more than your normal budget game. Hmm, a little bit much for a game that's a few years old and showing its age.





One of the biggest disappointments of my life came when I was about seven or eight years old. I think it was Hallowe'en, but it might have been Christmas, and occurred at a fancy dress party held at our local parish church.

Now my mum is dead good at sewing and had spent days working on what turned out to be an absolutely top wizard's outfit – pointy hat, moon-and-stars jacket, magic wand – the lot.

I was a bit shy as a lad and didn't really want to go, but after a little persuasion and the threat of a spanked bottom, along I toddled in all my regalia.

On arriving my mood improved almost instantly, not only because I spied the Grandstand "Pong" video game and numerous chocolate treats that constituted the prizes, but because all the other kids' outfits were completely cack.

Well I was laughing, I can tell you, as that sorry bunch of misfits traipsed hopelessly around the parish hall in dress that looked about as fancy as a Michael Foot overcoat. Pong was mine for the taking!

When it was time for the prize giving I sat between my parents with a smug grin on my greedy little face – a grin that would soon turn to utter disbelief as some girl or other from my class at school was ushered towards the makeshift stage and presented with the fabled Pong as a reward for her pathetic-looking fairy outfit.

"But well done to everybody, especially Paul Roundell – and his mum!", boomed our compere jovially. All was not lost – at least I'd won the sweets.

"And now ladies and gentlemen, please give a big round of applause to our infants for last week's smashing play," he continued, whereupon a dozen or so five-year-olds trooped towards the front to be dutifully furnished with Spangles and Texan Chew Bars.

Scandal! The sweets were for the kiddies and I would go home empty handed for there was... No... Second... Prize.

Video games have come a long way since the days of Pong – now renamed the Sega Master System – and Thalion are taking a bit of a risk in thrusting yet another racing game into a market already overcrowded with mediocre offerings.

If No Second Prize is to have a hope in hell of raking in a decent chunk of the Christmas loot it will have to provide us with substantially more entertainment than the vast majority of its predecessors.

It does – in fact I think it's safe to say that it's one of the very best racing sims around, and it even has a story. The most completely fabulous one-of-a-kind biketastic dreamcycle in the world is up for grabs – the owner is unknown but has offered his machine as a prize to whoever proves themself as the best motorcycle racer in the cosmos.

Competition has been narrowed down to just six riders – two women and four chaps – who must now race head to head for ultimate supremacy.

You can choose whichever rider you want to be after checking their individual strengths and weaknesses. Some are particularly good on bends, or may be very fast, while others have a high hit point count, meaning they can sustain all manner of damage and continue racing unabashed.

After making this momentous decision you will then need to decide how to set up your bike. Basically this involves choosing a sensitivity setting for the mouse – no joystick option at all, which is a bit of a shame – and locking the gears onto either manual or automatic. Having done this, you're ready to race. There are 20 tracks in all, and you must chug bravely round them all for points – coming last actually results in a deduction from your overall score.

Chug really wasn't the right word to use at all, as the game is incredibly fast. Viewed from a 3D driver's eye perspective, it will have you and anyone watching swaying from side to side as you swing around bends, under bridges and into surprised bystanders.

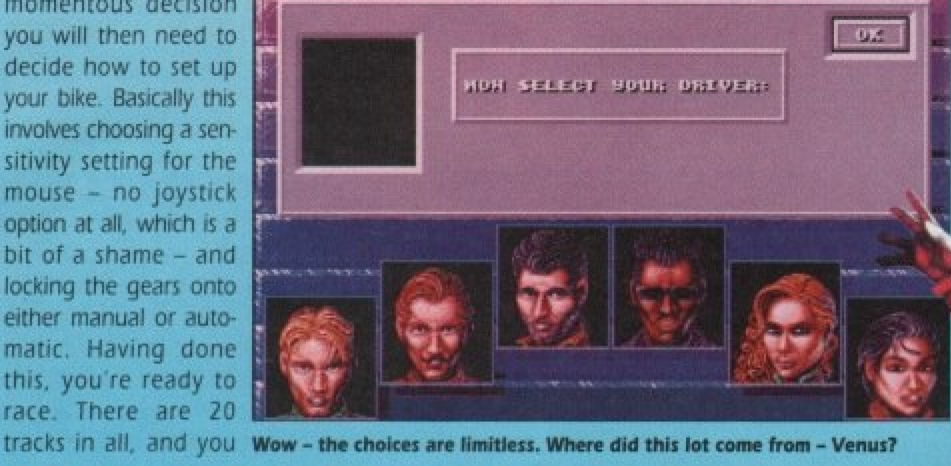
Changing gear manually involves toggling a couple of the keys, and is a bit tricky at first considering control is by mouse. The game has a replay mode, and you can watch your hopelessness from four separate angles including from a chopper – I enjoyed playing the replay backwards as it gave me the impression that I was actually overtaking someone.

Graphics and sound are pretty much what you would expect from this kind of game, which is not meant as a criticism – how could I complain when it's as fast as this? Since my last encounter with a real motorbike resulted in treatment for abrasions in a Greek hospital, I might not be the best person to advise you about the difficulty, but it does seem very hard.

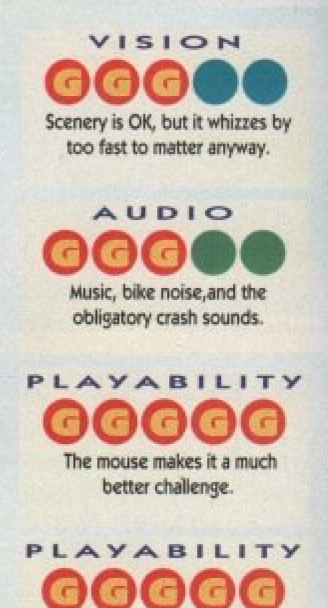
In the races I did manage to finish I came sixth out of six every single time – there's nothing at all wrong with the control, once mastered – it's just hard.

Hard it may be – but I played it solid couple hours without becoming slightly frustrated and I'm dying for an go right now. Well done Thalion on prod ing one of the best racers I've seen.

Pau



Wow – the choices are limitless. Where did this lot come from – Venus?



90%



Hot rubber, throbbing engine, and other such entendres

NO SECOND PRIZE

THALION ▪ £25.99 ▪ 1 meg ▪ Mouse ▪ Out now

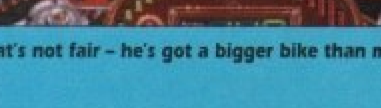


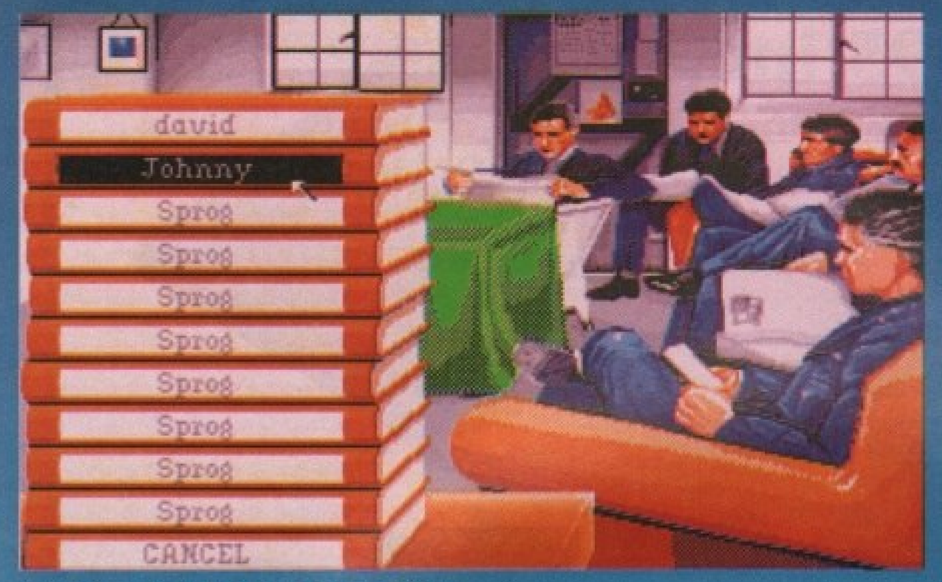
The handy replay mode enables you to relive those moments of glory time and time again

Why not mow down a couple of stewards?

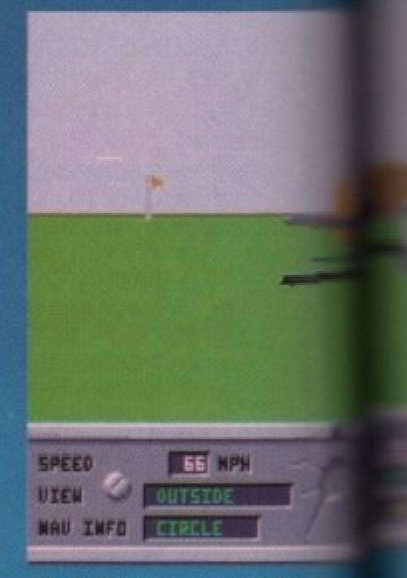


That's not fair – he's got a bigger bike than me. Wah!




Which of these budding young pilots will you choose to send to their certain deaths?

Scribble your name on your log book and then, err log away


Chock aways chaps and tally ho and away we go

Chocks away chaps...

REACH FOR

VIRGIN ▪ £30.99 ▪ 1 meg ▪ Joystick/mouse ▪ Out now

Hey, it's quiz night. F-15 Strike Eagle 2, Falcon, F-16 Combat Pilot and F-19 Stealth Fighter. What have all these games got in common? Have you got it yet? Come on, it's easy – they all start with the letter F!

Nah, only joking, the proper answer is that they are all flight simulators. More to the point, all the planes in these so-called flight simulators are very hi-tech and practically anyone can fly them.

Shooting down the enemy is no problem – click on a button and your missiles will hit the target, even though the target is 80 miles away.

What you really need is a flight sim to test your raw ability. What could be better than a World War 2 plane simulator like, err Knights of the Sky? Wait a minute, that's far too old, what we need is brand new World War 2 sim like, err, umm...

Oh well there doesn't seem to be another one. Thank God for that I'm bobbins at plane games (crash of lighting followed by small thud). Oh dear, God does move in mysterious ways. Look what I've just received – a brand spanking new copy of Reach for the Skies. Gusp!

It's 1940, it's summer and the future of World War 2 hangs in the balance. The German Luftwaffe and the might of the RAF are about to go into battle once more. This time it's the Battle of Britain and whoever wins will have a damn good chance of winning the war.

Well, in Reach for the Skies anything could happen because you get a choice of who you want to be. Germany or Britain, the choice is entirely up to you. So, if you're good enough you could change history.

Everyone knows that Britain won the battle because we're smart, but what would of happened if Germany had won the Battle of Britain and eventually the war? It doesn't bear thinking about – all I can say is that there is no way you'll get me scoffing frankfurters although it has to be said that you'd always get a sunbed when on holiday.



I'm glad I put on my brown trousers this morning. Waaarrrrrgggghhhh.

Wahey, follow me on a journey, a journey back through time where the sights and sounds of the 1940s will shock and surprise you. A chance to become a World War 2 fighter ace beckons. So, let's don our flying jackets, grab our yokes and take to the skies. Or, instead I could just boot up the ST and play Reach for the Skies.

Right the game has loaded. Hmm, it offers a choice of air forces. I could become a low-down, dirty Luftwaffe pilot or I could become a brave and heroic Brit and join the Royal Air Force. The choice is mine. Hmm, a bit of a toughie. Right, proud British fighter pilot it is. Time to jump into the old Spitfire and give those Jerries a right thrashing and be back in Blighty in time for tea and cakes. Chocks away, chaps.

Almost all of the game is spent in the air in your plane – or I should say planes, because you actually control a squadron. This enables you to hop from plane to plane during battle – very handy if you're about to get blown up.

The 3D is quite impressive, especially when you fly the plane over land. There are plenty of external 3D views, all with the option to zoom in and out.

The controls in Reach for the Skies are really simple. Pull back on the stick to gain altitude, push down on the stick to lose altitude and left to go left and right to go, err right. Oh, and you push the Fire button to, umm, fire. See, simple.

There are plenty of dials and meters to confuse you and the control panel looks authentic enough.

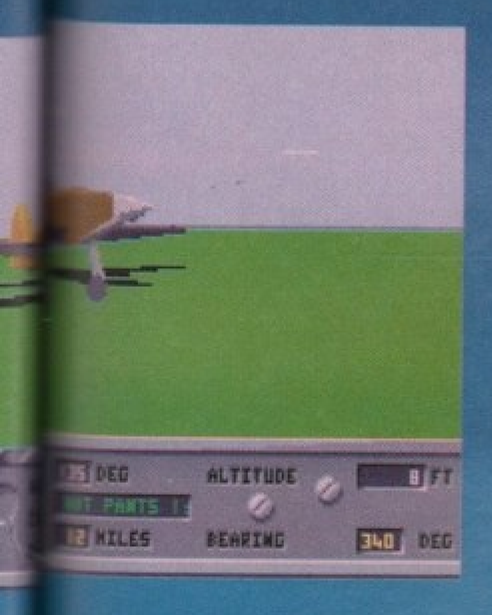
There is only one little problem with Reach for the Skies, and that is that when you take off it takes you ages before you finally get into battle with the enemy.

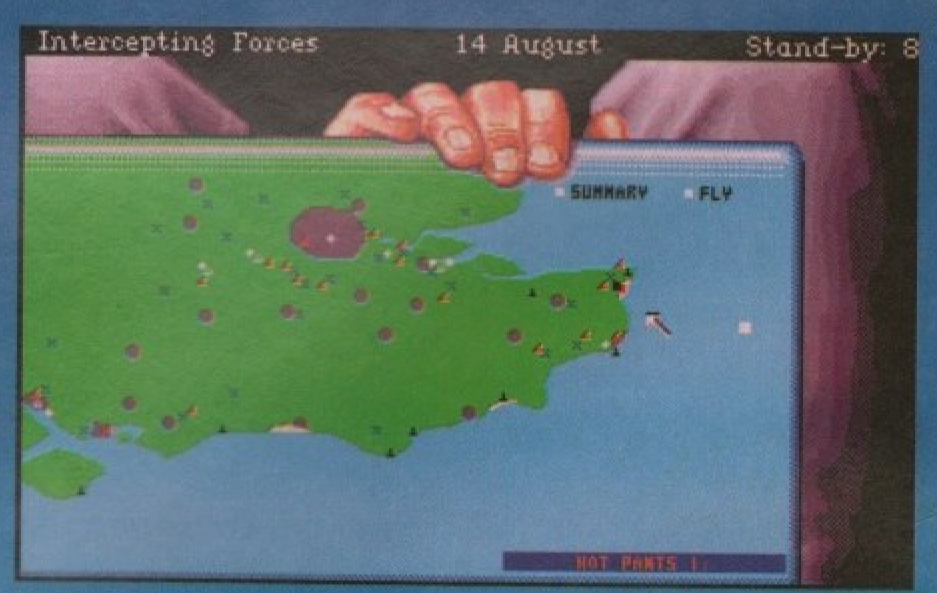
You can accelerate time, but it's not very realistic. Fortunately there is an option to start off in the air, so you're much closer to the enemy.

The game is quite difficult and chasing the enemy over land and sea is tough. The enemy always seems to be that one step ahead of you and it is really tough to shoot it down. It wouldn't be much of a challenge if you could shoot them down really easily, though.

Once your flight has been completed you have the great chance to watch it all again by using the video option. OK, so camcorders weren't exactly available back then, but the video option is a very nice touch. You could even send your finished comedy dogfights into Jeremy Beadle and win loads of money.

Despite the little problem, Reach for the Skies is an excellent flight simulator. The presentation in very nice and everything down to the tiniest little detail has been researched, which makes the game that little bit more





The southern coasts of England in all their glory. Whoopie doo. Sigh...



THE SKIES



Pride, boys. Go and get the krauts and it'll be medals all round...



Don't fire till you see the whites of their eyes. OK, guv, but where the bloody hell are they.

interesting.

There is a good manual that goes with the game explaining all about World War 2 and other such interesting facts about the planes and so on. You almost feel like you're actually flying a World War 2 fighter plane.

There is an ideal opportunity to enhance the atmosphere in three simple, but effective ways. One: Get a fan and position it on your monitor and set it at full blast. Two: Grab a white scarf and some swimming goggles and wear them. Three: Get someone with a shotgun to shoot it over your head every couple of minutes.

Hey, who said Gamer wasn't full of informative ideas? (me, get on with it you prat – Ed). One thing that I definitely would recommend, even though it's not essential, is that you play the game on an accelerated machine. This makes it mega fast and you will fall in love with it instantly.

If you're looking for a World War 2 flight sim that's as good as, if not better than Knights of the Sky, then Reach for the Skies could be the game that you're yearning for.

Rowan Software, the creators of such hits as Flight of the Intruder and, err, umm Flight of the Intruder, have come up with a cracker.

It's not exactly original stuff, but it's damn exciting and damn realistic. God damn. Reach out for Reach for the Skies, it's brill.

Jonathan



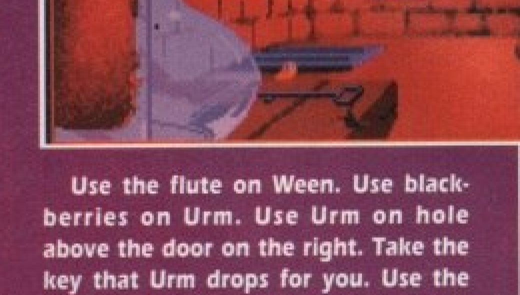
It's a Spitfire. Everyone shout "Yippie". Oh dear my brain is hurting...

The Gamer Guide to...



Stuck? Well, yes you probably are if you're reading this page. Don't worry I won't laugh at you, I'll just smirk slightly...





Right kids, without further ado, here's how to do it... Pick up tongs. Open cupboard. Take the lard and the knife. Take the crystal ball. Take the copper ball. Exit through the left-hand door. Take the straw. Use knife on reed. Use knife on reed again to create a flute. Use tongs on guard rail.

Take the wood. Go back through door. Go through facing door. Take portrait and place on hook. Take the sleeping draught and use it on the seeds to create a drug. Use drug on hideaway and the rat will fall asleep.

Click again on hideaway and take the wooden mould. Use grey key on the skull. Take the ring. Exit room. Use ring on copper ball. Use the straw and the wood on the fireplace. Use flute on Ween. Use strawberries on Urm.

Take gold. Take strawberry jam. Use flute on Ween. Use the jam on Urm. Use Urm on the fireplace. Use the cauldron on the fireplace. Use the gold on the cauldron. Take cauldron and use it on the wooden mould.

Take the golden key hat you've just made. Exit through facing door again. Use golden key on padlock. Take the half statue. Click on trap door to exit.

Take the tibia. Take the torch and use it on the hearth. Take the torch. Take the planks. Exit through the hole in the wall. Take the rope. Click on skull. Use ring on cauldron. Use copper ball on orbit on the skull. Take the moon stone.

Use the tibia on opening. Take copper ball back. Exit through the hole. Use ring on the copper ball. Use cauldron on hearth. Use the lard on the cauldron. Take cauldron.

Exit back through the hole. Use the oil on the opening. Click on the lever. Exit right once more. Use the rope on the lanks. Use the now bound planks on the precipice. Exit through the hole facing you.

Click on skull that's on the tomb. Take the sun stone. Use the torch on the torch holder. Take the spear that the guard on the right is holding. Take the tibia – it would be quite hard to find if it wasn't for this Cheat Mode.

The tibia is at the bottom of the guard on the left guard's right leg. Use the tibia on the spear. Use the newly constructed tibia-spear on curtain. Use tibia-spear once more on the blackberries. Take the blackberries.

Use the flute on Ween. Use blackberries on Urm. Use Urm on hole above the door on the right. Take the key that Urm drops for you. Use the key on the door lock. Exit through door. Click on the sword.

Click on the hook holding sword to wall. Take sword and use it on the statue. Put the sword back. Click on the trap. Use cauldron on acid twice. Put cauldron back in your inventory. Exit back through door.

Click on the stele. Use acid from the cauldron on runes. Place moonstone in the niche. Place sunstone in niche on top of the moonstone. Exit right to the other room once again. Click on sun and moon symbols, then the crown symbol.

Take elixir from the hole in wall. Now click on the moon and sword symbols then click on the crown symbol again. Take effigy from the second hole in wall. Exit back to the stele. Place effigy in the niche. Swap the sun and moonstones around and you'll obtain your first grain of sand.

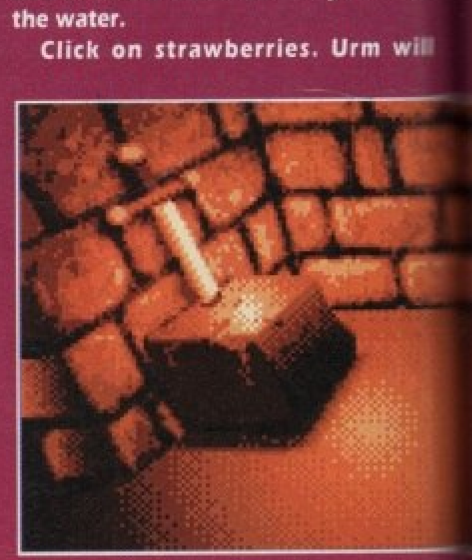
Click on bridge. A monster will appear and won't allow you to pass over the bridge. In the meantime a feather will float down. Use the feather on the chest. Some objects will appear. Take the pollen and the venom.

Experiment with them on the three pieces of quartz that are lying nearby. Now mix the venom and pollen together in the cauldron to create a potion. Use newly created potion on leaves. Take strawberries from bush. Use flute on Ween.

Give the strawberries on Urm. Take gold and use with half statue. Use the now full statuette on the water. Urm will take the elixir before you cross the water.

Click on strawberries. Urm will

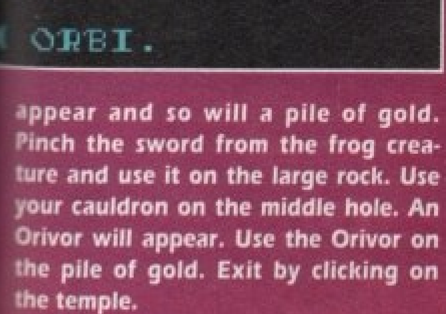












appear and so will a pile of gold. Pinch the sword from the frog creature and use it on the large rock. Use your cauldron on the middle hole. An Orivor will appear. Use the Orivor on the pile of gold. Exit by clicking on the temple.

Use the venom on the snake and it will turn into a piece of quartz. Take the tiara. Use the torch on the brambles. Use Cauldron with the ring, then use the copper ball with the tiara. Use the pipe on the wasp trap. Use wasp trap on wasps. Exit through door.

It's now time to fight the dragon. You are given three magic pendants to beat him. You have to change the dragon to a wasp. The puzzle is actually easier than it looks. All you have to do is click on the bottom pendant until the dragon changes to a wasp and you change into a worm.

Now all you have to do is use the wasp trap on the dragon who is now of course a wasp. Use the flute on Ween and Urm will appear...again!

Take the cherries from the bottom of the tree and give them to Urm. Urm will then take the wasp trap from out of your way. Exit via the door on the right-hand side. You are now the proud owner of the second grain of sand.

Click on mechanism and take the phial. Now this puzzle does vary, but use Petroy to help you figure it out. It simply involves clicking on the pictures of the circle, triangle, square and the hexagon.

The key to the puzzles is how many corners each shape has. Once you've tried the combination, click on the lever and the door will magically open. Exit through the door to continue.

Take the hammer and use it on the arm of the statue. Take the amphora and use it on the hearth. Take the wood and use it on the hearth. Take the ECU and the rag and put them in your inventory.

Take the gargoyle and use it on the cyma. Click on stone. Click on fountain and take the lichen. There are some numbered teeth, click on them in this order. 12, 4, 6 and 3 and the fountain will start to work.

Use the lichen on the hearth. Use the magnifying glass that's now on the floor on the beam of light. Use phial on the enclave. Use rag on water. Use wet rag on head of statue then use it on the head's eyes to reveal some quartz.

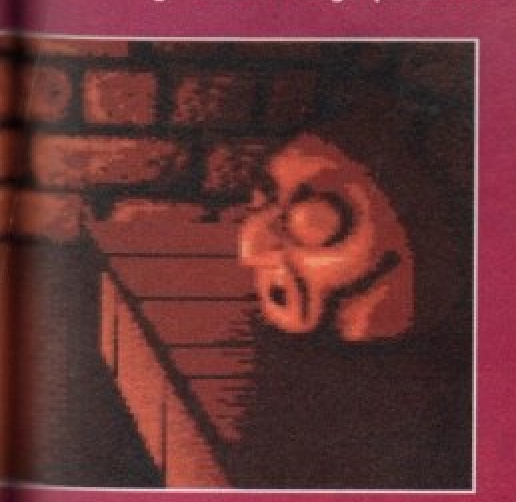
Use the pollen on the right eye and take the flower. Use the venom on the left eye. Use pipe on snake. Use coil on gargoyles. Use wet rag on coil. Use flower on hearth.

Use leaf on hearth. Finally use the phialtre on the guardian. Once transformation has taken place use copper ball on small statue that has appeared. Click on statue. Exit through door.

You now own all three grains of sand. You might think you have completed the quest, but the Princess has been kidnapped by the evil Kraal and taken to Volcano Island and if you don't rescue her she's just about to become a wife to the slimy Kraal.

So, there's still plenty more of the quest left, but I'm not going to tell you how to do it. I think I've given you enough help, but if you are really desperate to complete the whole game then you might just find the rest of the solution in next month's Gamer.





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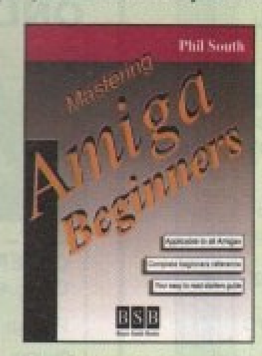


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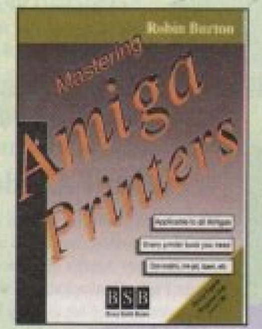
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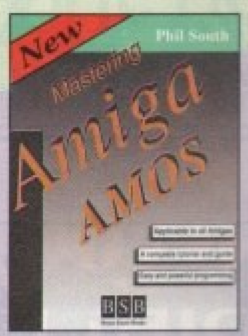
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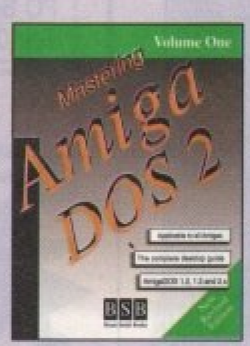
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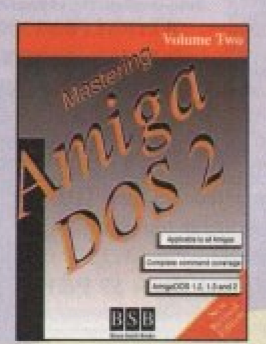
Mastering Amiga AMOS
Phil South, 320 pages, £19.95, ISBN: 1-873308-12-4



Perhaps the most comprehensive introductory tutorial ever written about the Amiga's operating system in a massive 416 pages. If you want to learn about AmigaDOS 1.3 or 2 then this is the book to buy. It assumes you know nothing about the subject but – if you follow the exercises – will turn you into an expert! *Free* Scripts disk available.

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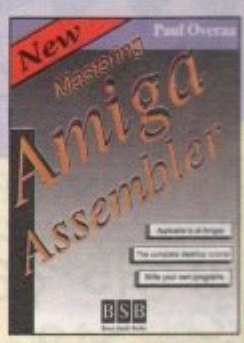
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This title is a full reference guide to the AmigaDOS command set and has recently been completely revised to include coverage of over 125 commands. Arranged alphabetically, it includes many worked examples. A must for the AmigaDOS programmer, it fully documents AmigaDOS 1.2, 1.3 and 2. Contains details on Mountlist, Commodities, etc.

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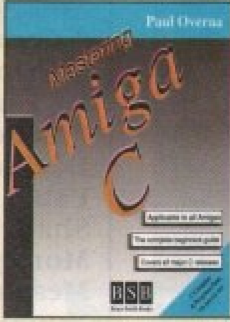


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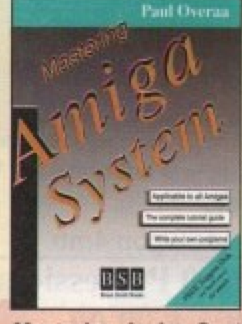
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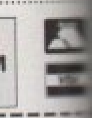


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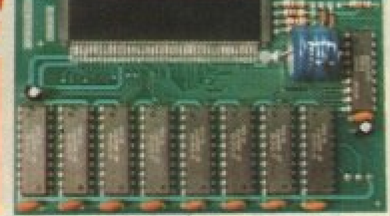
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amiga almanac

Nine pages of applications for the Amiga

Talking

With Amos Pro and ARexx, you can get your programs communicating with an unprecedented degree of ease. Alex Gian discusses a minor revolution

The arrival of Amos Professional has caused quite a few ripples among Amiga programmers, and those of you that have been reading about it will have noticed how much attention is given to the ARexx interface – and rightly so.

The problem with Amos for many programmers was that ARexx was a bit too alien to the Amiga environment. Adding an ARexx interface goes a long way towards making it a truer Amiga environment, while at the same time allowing it to live up to its name as an alternative AMiga Operating System.

The thing with Amos is that it makes so many things so easy – it can almost be viewed as an application generator (like CanDo for instance) rather than a language.

For instance, it offers split screens that are not available under Intuition, it has automatic double-buffering that makes the Intuition alternative look like a nightmare, not to mention all the sprite and animation stuff. With a little thought, it can be used to design excellent interfaces.

Possibilities

Linking all this presentation power with existing Amiga applications opens the door to a lot of possibilities. Most modern Amiga programs support ARexx these days, and it is nice to know that all this software can now be linked to Amos Pro.

After all, there are almost no Amiga application generators without an ARexx port. So I was more than a little curious to see what Amos Pro had to offer.

First of all, if you are using Amos Pro directly from its boot disk, then you will have to load up ARexx separately, using the "rexxmast" command, but if you have been following this series you probably already know that! If you are working from Workbench 2.0, then, of course, ARexx should already be running.

Amos Pro has a special command for running other Amiga programs in the background, called "Exec" – don't confuse this with any other part of the Amiga's operating system! Any program that could be launched from the CLI can also be launched from within Amos, eg:

```
Exec "df1:mydir/myprogram"
```

Rexxmast can be started like this if necessary. The "Exec" command can also take an optional argument, to determine where the output of the command should go.

The default is NIL:. This option was not working on my version of Amos, but a small bug like this is inevitable in these early days. I am sure it will be fixed soon.

If you want to redirect the output of your "Exec" command to a file or window, you can still do so by using the standard DOS redirection operator >, eg:

```
Exec >t:tempfile "df1:myprog"
```

But since this article is about the ARexx interface, why am I concerning myself so much with the CLI interface? You will see in a minute.

The following Amos instructions and functions are provided for direct support of ARexx:

ARexx Open – Open a special ARexx port.
ARexx Close – Close the ARexx port.
ARexx Exist – Check if a port is really there.
ARexx Wait – Wait patiently for an ARexx message at the special port.
=ARexx – Return the status of any messages at the port.
=ARexx$(n) – Return the nth ARexx argument string.
ARexx Answer n – Reply to an ARexx message, and set the return code.

As you can see they are useful for opening an ARexx port and receiving ARexx messages. They correspond roughly to the equivalent functions of the rexxsupport.library, which we have already seen, but are even simpler, since only the specially opened port is checked.

These commands are meant to be used inside a loop which constantly checks if any new messages have arrived, and processes them as they come in. The technique has been fully described in the Oct '92 issue.

"But hold on a minute!" you may say, "that's all fine for receiving ARexx commands, but what

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If you want to play your part in the ARexx explosion, send your scripts and additional programs to: *AC ARexx Library, Amiga Computing, Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield, SK10 4NP*

loud and clear

if I want to send an ARexx message?"

A good question! After all, since we are likely to be using Amos as a front end, it is probably more important to send commands out, than to receive them. That is, you are more likely to want to use Amos to control other programs, than the other way round.

Interestingly, there is no direct way to send ARexx messages out. There is no equivalent of the ARexx instruction "ADDRESS", or any other means of accessing external host ports.

As a result you are left with an ARexx interface that is well implemented, but only half there. I am almost led to suspect that the designers of the ARexx interface were not fully aware of the possibilities of ARexx.

For the time being, if you want to send out ARexx messages you will have to resort to the "Exec" command which we have already mentioned.

Instead of sending out an ARexx command directly from Amos, you write an ARexx script that does the job, and launch it from Amos. If your script is called sendcommand.rexx , then this will do the trick:

```
Exec "rx sendcommand"
```

Your ARexx script must be saved in the rexx: directory, otherwise you must specify the full path. Small command sequences can also be sent directly as strings, but you must remember to embed the quotation mark, eg:

```
Exec "rx "+Chr$(34)+"address 'PORT_X' 'DO_IT'"
```

As you can imagine, the above process is not the most elegant, and also slows down the ARexx messages, since they have to go through the DOS layer.

If you want your ARexx scripts to run asynchronously, you can launch them using the:

```
Exec "run rx "+SCRIPNAME$
```

combination. Script outputs can be redirected (and saved) to files for later use.

Amos Pro with its ARexx interface can now be looked upon as an applications generator

Does this mean that Amos ARexx port is a failure? Not in my view. The features provided are sufficient for the occasional user, and programmers who need more can easily create it.

I am also certain that we will see many extensions to Amos Pro, and better ARexx facilities will appear if they are needed.

In other words (or to put it bluntly), Amos Pro is a fully-fledged language, rather than a special-purpose application generator, and if you need a custom ARexx interface, you will have to program it yourself, either in Amos, or more probably in assembler.

Just as in any other language, the standard message-passing and port handling routines of the exec.library apply; so do the ARexx message rules of the rexxsyslib.library.

I managed to write a routine to invoke ARexx macros directly in just a few lines of Amos code. Macros can be either commands or functions and results are returned as Amos Basic strings.

That's more like it! Now I can use my library of specialised string-processing ARexx macros from within Amos. Without this feature I would have had to rewrite them all in Basic – that would certainly have put me off using Amos as a front-end.

More purpose-built Amos-ARexx interfaces are bound to appear in the future. There is a large area to explore. Getting Amos to co-operate with other Amiga programs via ARexx is going to be more in the domain of so-called serious programming, so a bit of DIY is only natural at the beginning.

As someone who is interested in using Amos Pro as a front-end for applications, I like it. Be prepared to see some really interesting programs. The potential is certainly there.

Programming interfaces

There is good news for those that would like to program their own interfaces – Amos Pro supports assembly code at two levels.

Firstly, you can open any Amiga library, stuff the processor registers, and call any function, simply by specifying its offset. Special facilities are provided (using an Amos bank), which will automatically give you the EQUates of all the Amiga system structures and all LVO's of all functions. Even structure fields are handled intelligently. This is a brilliant touch.

Unfortunately the automatic system (the SET EQUATE BANK instruction) was not working when I tested it, so I had to get all the values from the include files, but I trust that this will be fixed soon too.

These features are a great way to program the heart of the system interactively, whether you are designing custom ports, or anything else.

Secondly, you can run assembled machine code directly from your Amos programs. Obviously, with this feature any addition can be made to the language.

An apology

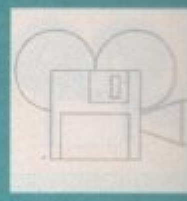
In a previous article (Oct '92), I described the ARexx interface of Gold Disk's HyperBook.

At the time I said that despite having one of the best ARexx interfaces I have ever seen, there were minor problems with WorkBench 2.0. I am pleased to say that Gold Disk have in fact corrected this.

While it does not have the advanced graphics abilities of a CanDo or Amos, HyperBook still remains one of the most charmingly simple presentation packages to use.

Its excellent ARexx interface also allows it to be hooked up to all sorts of things. My apologies to anyone who may have been put off. Rest assured that HyperBook now works just fine with Workbench 2.0.

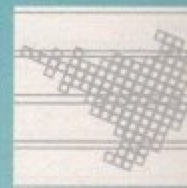
















DTV for beginners

If the Commodore compendium is wearing a little thin, perhaps it's time to get serious. Paul Austin explains the basic steps of DTV

Have you been putting your close friends and family through festive camcorder torture, endless shots of uncle Frank yodelling into the great white telephone, little Johnnie doing unspeakable things with the Christmas pud, and countless other memorable cinematic moments?

The question is, how do you add a little style to the proceedings? Well, as you've probably guessed, here's where the Amiga comes in.

Although Santa may have only delivered the basics in the form of a standard machine, you're still well on your way to a masterpiece without the need for any additional add-ons.

But before you dive for the record button it's well worth spending some time with the software exploring the massive potential of what has become the ultimate DTV workhorse.

There are a few points you should keep in mind. First, video signals are made up of interlaced signals and as a result you should ensure that the Amiga is using interlace prior to any recording.

Secondly, a standard Amiga display in any resolution is by default smaller than full-screen video. As a result, use of overscan is essential if you want to avoid annoying borders around the edge of your artwork when they appear on-screen.

Saturation limits

The final essential is to ensure that the colours used within the image do not exceed the saturation limits required by a composite signal. To do this before committing any images to tape, first go to the palette requester and select each used colour in turn.

As you do this, the various RGB saturation levels will show as a figure between 0 and 15. As you cycle through the colours ensure that saturation levels does not exceed 12 in any of the three colour fields.

This is an essential to avoid the dreaded colour bleeding often associated with Composite/VHS video. This prerequisite applies to any project bound for videotape. As a consequence, always stick firmly to this figure.

Within certain packages the 0 to 15 levels are replaced by a 0 to 255 system for increased accuracy. Within such packages the maximum levels should not exceed 192 to avoid excessive blood-letting.

Aside for the essential interlace, optional but advisable interlace and of course adherence to suitable saturation levels, the rest is pretty much up to your imagination.

However, there are a few pointers which make life much easier and your creations even more impressive. For example when using brightly coloured text on equally colourful backdrops it's always a good idea to use a dark keyline around the text.

This is yet another ploy in the battle against bleeding. Even when composite saturation levels are met, second or third generation copies can still bleed badly without the intervention of the aforementioned keyline.

Yet again good old DPaint comes to the rescue with an automatic keyline feature entitled Edge which can be found lurking within the brush menu. To employ the feature, simply cut your text out as a brush and then highlight and release the edge feature.

It may need several applications to arrive at the desired keyline, but once complete you instantly solve the problem of second generation bleeding and in addition make your creations far more eye-catching in the process.

Apart from basic colour precautions the only other essential aspect of quality control is to invest in quality RCA/phono connections. Whenever possible always use well insulated connections and try avoid excessive cable length.

If both of the above are ignored, image quality will invariably suffer due to the sometimes frightening amounts of interference generated by assorted household appliances.

As far as design is concerned, a touch of animation is always a real crowd-pleaser. Again DPaint comes to the rescue with arguably the best anim generation and control system of any Amiga paint package. If you're still not in a fit state to begin wading through the DPaint manual, a little experimentation can soon fill in for actual study time. First create the number of frames you require then design a logo or opening title.



With DPaint's powerful Move requester, a wide range of spins and tumbles are possible

Next cut out the graphic as a brush and then stamp it down with the right mouse button in the desired position. Now select the move requester from the anim pull-down menu and simply type a few random figures into the distance and angle windows.

Experimentation

In the case of the angles it's usually a good idea to stick with 45 degree increments in order to keep things tidy.

Now before you do anything else, under no circumstances hit the draw button as it's here where the experimentation begins. On the other side of the requester you'll find the Preview option which allows unlimited dry runs prior to actually drawing, which on complex or large anims can take an age, especially on standard machines.

When you're happy with the effect, simply click on the draw button and make yourself a well-earned coffee while the software automatically renders the anim.

Once complete you can add additional frames by simply moving to the end of the anim and appending as many frames as you need. As long as you don't go mad, even a standard machine will be more than capable off generating an impressive anim/title sequence.

Once your creation is complete, simply connect the Modulator Out to the Video In on your VCR and record your masterpiece onto the desired section of tape using the RF out on the video - connected to a TV - as a guide to placement.

If possible make a copy of you master prior to recording as once the button is hit there's no way back. Happy titling...

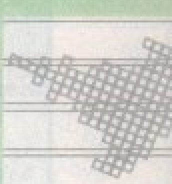
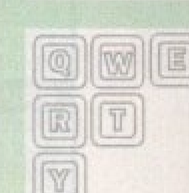
Built for the job

Due to the basic design of the Amiga, DTV comes as second nature. Apart from the machine's unrivalled graphic power, other essentials include a video-standard 15Hz signal, overscan and interlaced output and in the case of the A600/1200 a built-in modulator which makes the DTV connection almost embarrassingly simple.

Aside from the essential hardware in the form of an Amiga and a suitable VCR/camcorder, the only other prerequisite is good old DPaint which almost everyone gets as part of the Commodore bundles.







Using libraries

Library routines can help both assembler and C programmers. Margaret Stanger does some borrowing

A third-generation language like Basic or Cobol can be coded quickly, but the program runs slowly – the source code is people friendly.

A second-generation language like assembler is coded slowly and painfully, but the program runs quickly – the source code is computer friendly.

The C language is somewhere in-between – it is reasonably quick to write, and can be compiled into fairly efficient machine code.

C is becoming standardised. This makes it very portable. Source code can be written and tested on one type of computer, then compiled into object code, tested and run.

The source code can then be copied to a completely different type of computer (or network), and should compile and run successfully.

C does not have input and output facilities of its own – these are added from a library or set of related routines that can be linked with the object code. Each compiler comes with a set of standard C library high level input and output functions.

Lower level

In addition there are several Amiga libraries, each containing lower level routines for use in your programs. These functions are often called by higher level C library functions.

These programming pages will concentrate on the Amiga library routines rather than the C syntax, unless I have a storm of protest from my readers.

The C language can be extended almost indefinitely, by adding routines and creating a custom library, or by including third-party libraries.

Let's look at C libraries. The main compiler header directory contains some header files (they have .h as a suffix) in addition to its sub-directories.

These header files contain the ANSI-compatible prototypes of the standard input and output functions, and other definitions.

To use one of these functions, the appropriate header file should be included with the source code. This command tells the compiler to add the header file at compile time, but not clutter the source code with it.

This source code will be more portable than the source code using Amiga Library routines, but not as versatile or efficient. The program source code listing (iolib.c) is on the CoverDisk. When the object program (iolib) is run, the program displays a message using the built-in formatted print "printf" command, and then another message by using the standard library "fprintf" command to write to the current output file or console.

The main Amiga libraries used are Exec, DOS, graphics and Intuition. Exec library routines handle the multitasking and the lowest level of interaction between the hardware and the software.

DOS library routines handle input and output control. Associated with each library is a special file with the extension ".fd", these files are usually found on the Extras disk in their own directory.

An .fd file contains a list of the routines in the library, together with the input parameters that each routine takes. The more recent ANSI-compatible compilers have a proto directory included with the compiler headers.

Prototype

This directory has a header file for each library, containing the prototype for each command. If you open an Amiga library at run time, all its routines become available. The linker knows where to find the routines, and can link them to the rest of the object code.

The OpenLibrary routine is found in the Exec library, all the Exec library routines are always available.

Assembler programmers can now have sprites designed using a program like DPaint. The height, colours and pixel data can be saved on disk and read into an assembler program when required.

Each sprite has a data list of data word pairs. The first two words of each sprite's data are control words to initialise the sprite.

Bits 15 to 8 of the first control word contain the vertical position of the first line of the sprite, bits 7 to 0 contain the sprite's horizontal start position.

Bits 15 to 8 of the second control word contain the line after the last vertical line of the sprite. Bits 2 to 0 of the second control word contain the most significant bits of the first line, last line and horizontal position respectively.

The last two data words always contain zero. The intervening data words contain the pixel data. The first two sprites use colours 16 to 19, the next two 20 to 23, the next two 24 to 27 and the last two 28 to 31.

The sprite data is copied into chip memory. The Copper list can be set up to copy the address of the start of each sprite's data into the appropriate SPRPT registers. The colour instructions can also be included in the Copper list.

The DPaint utility was used to save two sprites as separate "brushes", producing a short IFF file for each brush. I designed the sprites to be 16 pixels wide. I used four colours, the first being transparent.

The file reader module "readsprite.a" can read and interpret this file, or a similar file produced by another artist program.

The routine 'readfile' is similar to the IFF sprite file in last month's *Amiga Computing*, a simplified picture file reader without a routine to unscramble compressed data.

The routine can return the height of the sprite to the calling program. The routine is:

```
spriteheight = readfile(name,spritedata,colourlist)
(d0,d1,d2)
```

The inputs are :

name – the pointer to the name of the file containing the data

spritedata – a pointer to the memory array to hold the sprite

bitplane data (the address of the third word of the sprite)

colourlist – a pointer to the memory storing the colours for the sprite (the colourlist address plus an offset for colour 16,20,24 or 28)

The output in Register 'd0' is:

spriteheight – the height of the sprite contained in the file

The routine will look for the usual chunkheaders in an IFF file. The BMAP chunk will be decoded to give the sprite height – the other data is either known (width and depth) or irrelevant (data from the screen the brush was saved on).

The CMAP chunk contains the colours used when the sprite was designed. These colours will be copied into the correct place in the colourlist.

The BODY chunk contains the bitplane data – the routine copies it into chosen area in memory. All other chunks are read, and their data ignored. The routine could easily be extended to process these chunks.

The sprite height is returned so that the position of the last line of the sprite can be calculated and put in the second sprite control word. The main program will then have all the necessary sprite and colour information for the Copper list.

Demo routines

The short demo program amilib on the CoverDisk uses five library routines. From the Exec library, OpenLibrary(libName,version) opens a chosen library. A pointer to the library base is returned. CloseLibrary(library) closes a library.

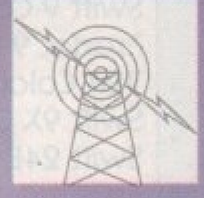
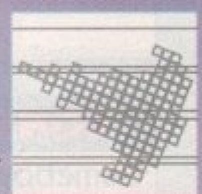
From the Dos Library, Delay(timeout) waits for a given timeout. Output() finds the file handle for writing text in the current window. A pointer to the current filehandle is returned.

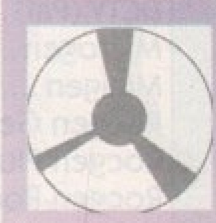
Write(filehandle,buffer,length) will write to a file or a window. The complete program source code listing (amilib.c) is on the CoverDisk.

When the object program (amilib) is run, the program opens the DOS library. If the library opens successfully, the program displays a short message, delays for a few seconds, closes the library and exits.





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Sound essentials

Paul Austin singles out the best selection of software for any musical beginner

Whether you're a dedicated muso or just an interested bystander with a shiny new machine waiting at your fingertips, getting into Amiga music can be much cheaper and simple than you might imagine.

To start we'll look at the market from the bystanders position, highlighting the cheap and cheerful products which for as little as £2 allow an absolute beginner to create music on a par with anything found on commercial games software.

As you've probably guessed, we're talking PD and more precisely Med – a program that's been the premier PD soundtracker clone for longer than most Amiga musos would care to remember.

Due to its prolific success and countless updates – courtesy of its creator Teigo Kinnunen – the PD libraries are literally fit to burst with countless revisions of the aforesaid Med.

However, if you're after the very latest offering Amiganuts United is undoubtedly the first place to look, primarily because they've managed to obtain exclusive rights to distribute the licenceware eight channel version which when complete with manual comes in at a less than PD price tag of £30.

Commodore 64

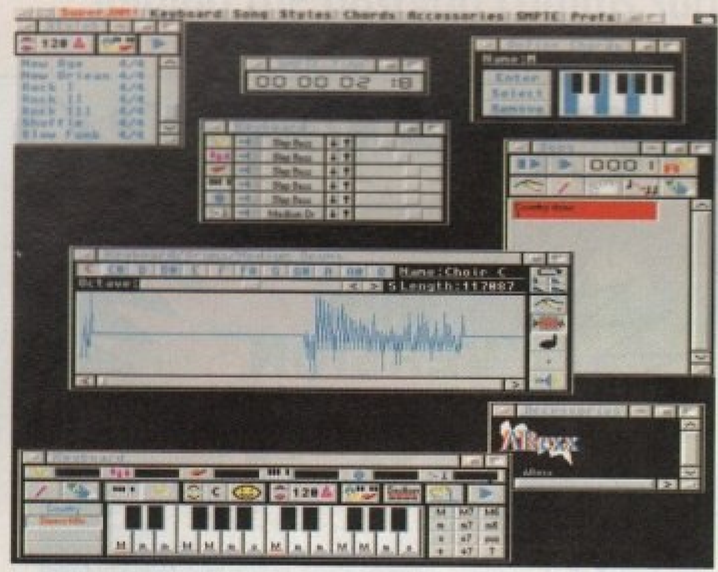
Although eight channels may sound more attractive than the four track shareware alternative the additional tracks do not play samples but merely sequence Commodore 64-style synth sounds.

For the beginner these additional tracks aren't essential. As a result, the four track is perhaps the ideal beginners choice for testing the water prior to the larger investment in the licenceware alternative.

As mentioned above, almost all the major libraries – with the exception of Amiganuts – carry the four track version for around £2. When ordering be sure it's the latest, namely v3.20.

Like all the soundtracker clones, Med employs standard 8-bit samples as its primary sound source. These can be either created yourself – see this month's sampler roundup – or alternatively there are a wide selection of pre-recorded effects and instruments that can be bought direct either on disk or CD from PD libraries or dedicated sample suppliers.

If you're happier with pre-recorded sounds, quality commercial sources include the Zero-G Datafiles which carry both CD and disk-based collections. They're available direct from:



The ultimate Midi and Amiga combination in the form of the excellent Super Jam

Time and Space, PO Box 306
Herts, HP4 3EP
Tel: 0442 870681

Although of excellent quality, the vast majority of the Zero-G samples are heavily dance-oriented with assorted scratches and popular hook lines.

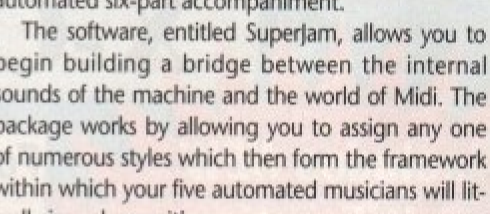
For any would-be DJs or rave fans the collection is ideal. However if you're planning to build original tracks from the ground up the next collection, namely the Sample Series, is probably a more attractive proposition.

This series comes from those loveable Mancunians at Gajits Music Software. Unlike the Zero-G collection, the Sampler Series is comprised entirely of sounds borrowed from the latest synths. If you're interested in a more purist approach to plagiarism you can obtain the aforesaid collection from:

Gajits Music Software , I-Mex House
40 Princess Street , Manchester
M1 6DE Tel: 061-236 2515/4

A step up the ladder

If you've still got a few pennies spare from Christmas, Blue Ribbon Soundworks offer an intermediate package which allows the user to employ their own or pre-recorded samples as part of an automated six-part accompaniment.



The software, entitled SuperJam, allows you to begin building a bridge between the internal sounds of the machine and the world of Midi. The package works by allowing you to assign any one of numerous styles which then form the framework within which your five automated musicians will literally jam along with.

All you need do is add the chords of your choice and of course play your part as the lead soloist. No matter what chord progression you add, the other members will automatically play a suitable accompaniment.

For example, if you specify a rock style with a chord progression of say E minor, G and A, your automated bass player is almost certain to rip straight into Smoke on the Water!

Ok, nobody said the package is perfect, but with a bit of practice you can easily generate perfectly acceptable lift music which can then be worked into a pseudo-original or used directly as backing music on various multimedia exploits.

Besides the fun and functionality of the package, the beauty is that it's equally at home with Midi information as it is with converted Amiga samples.

If you're looking for an affordable and interesting introduction to composition plus both an educational and speedy production tool, SuperJam is perfect.

Easy affordable Midi

If you're looking to side-step the internal features of the Amiga altogether, there's a whole selection of budget-conscious sequencers waiting in the wings.

Although all of the programs listed are primarily aimed at Midi, they also all fully support the machines internal abilities with equal enthusiasm.

While this is not a particularly strong selling point in the eyes of serious users, it does mean that if Midi music is your goal but finances mean a wait for the necessary hardware, you can still come to terms with the software via standard Amiga samples and then apply your new-found skills later on. Ideal choices for any potential investor include Sequencer One Plus, MusicX and Bars & Pipes Professional.

The first of the three is perhaps the ideal choice boasting an extremely user friendly editing system and intuitive design.

On the downside, the package isn't the cheapest as the now rather elderly but usable MusicX easily lays claim to that particular title.

MusicX itself was easily the hottest item on the Amiga music scene a few years back and still remains a viable option especially if you're prepared to shop around. The final option is to throw caution to the wind and invest in Bars & Pipes Professional which although far from cheap offers a degree of expandability only equalled by KCS 3.5.

The reason for the Bars & Pipes Pro bias as opposed to KCS is simply that although the two are on a par for power, Bars & Pipes Pro is much easier to master for the outright beginner.



E-mail culture

Joining the bustling comms sub-culture brings with it its own responsibilities and rules. Pat Winstanley talks etiquette



I wonder how many people reading this have acquired a shiny new modem over the festive period? If you are one, do you know how to behave in the comms world? Do you know what to do and not do to make yourself welcome?

Like any other community activity, the golden rule is to consider others as well as yourself. In comms this basically means you should be aware of what your activities are costing others.

Although access to most BBSs is free (other than the cost of your phone bill), somebody has to pay for all the files and message areas made available to you.

A BBS is generally run on an amateur basis. The sysop is using his own equipment that he's bought with his own money. He's also paying at least rental for the phone line you dial in on.

One of the biggest attractions of a modem is the opportunity it gives you to grab software cheaply and easily. You find the file you want, download it, and bingo - the latest version, or patch, or demo has cost you just a few pence.

But how do these files become available to you in the first place? Where does the BBS get them from?

Cheapest

Well there are several ways for sysops to grab files for their lists. The simplest is for users like you to upload interesting programs to the BBS. This is also the cheapest for the sysop.

Another way is for the sysop to download new files from other boards, which costs him money. Yet a third way is for you to send the sysop files on disk - a lot cheaper than uploading if you have a slow modem.

Just check to make sure the sysop can handle your disk - many boards catering for Amiga users are actually run on PCs.

Most boards have an upload/download ratio policy. This simply means that you can only download a certain number of files before you must upload something to the board.

The snag with this is that you might not have any software that isn't already on the board. If you feel like this, don't worry. You're not alone.

An alternative which many sysops are happy with is for you to become active in the message areas. The more interesting messages a board contains, the more attractive it is to other users of that board.

Yet another alternative is a download credit system. With this you literally buy credits, each credit allowing a certain number of bytes to be downloaded.

Some boards running this system even give download credits as prizes in competitions on the board.

Panic

When either uploading or downloading, try to check your own setup as far as you can before calling on the sysop for help. Take your time too.

It's very easy to panic while you're worrying about a phone bill, but it's well worth checking out any instructions. Menus and prompts are generally easy to use if you stop and think about what you're trying to do. Common sense is all you really need to work things out.

One of the most regular problems is setting "protocols". These are methods of computers talking to each other – like Zmodem and so on – and need to be the same at both your end and the BBS end.

What it boils down to is that your local BBS is providing you with a free service. If you want to stay on good terms with the sysop you should try to put in as much as you get out of the board.

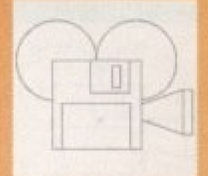
A very common complaint among sysops is the rudeness of callers who log in to their boards, trawl the file lists, download everything in sight, then simply log off again without so much as saying "Thanks".

It only takes a few seconds to leave a message for the sysop, and your feedback on a board's services will always be welcome. That's not just a computer at the other end of the line. There's a human being there too!

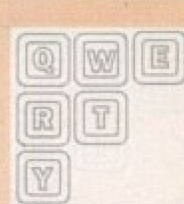
Pat Winstanley can be contacted on Fidonet at 2:250/107.99 or as peewee@cix.compulink.co.uk, or you can write to her c/o *Amiga Computing*.

Keep your sysop happy

- Always give your real name and phone number when you register. Think how you would feel if a stranger knocked on your door and gave you a false name.
- Take a few seconds to read any news, bulletins, instructions and so on – it'll save you far more time and money in the long run.
- Don't ring the sysop voice at night – the BBS may be running but the sysop is probably tucked up in bed. If you need help during unsocial hours, just leave a message then log on again another time.
- If a board states the hours it's on-line, respect the fact that the BBS probably shares the family phone line. Don't call outside the stated hours.
- Always log off the board using the option provided in the menu. If you don't you could leave the board thinking you're still there, and denying access to other users.
- If you must log off "illegally" (dropped carrier for instance), try to let the sysop know what happened – it will help him sort out any problems your accident may have caused.
- When uploading files, try to compress them first – sysops don't have unlimited hard disk space. And try to use a common compression technique to make things simple for any other users.
- If the board's file areas are sorted into sections, upload to the correct area. If not, upload to the sysop's general area. Either way, leave a description of the file too.
- If you want to download a file which will take longer than you have available, ask the sysop nicely and he'll probably upgrade your access temporarily.
- Don't pester the sysop for privileged access to the board. When he trusts you, and knows what you want and need, he'll probably upgrade you permanently anyway.





The right tracks

Writing a convincing soundtrack for your Amos creations is actually very easy. Phil South says: "Let the music play..."

It seems that every program on the Amiga written with Amos has some lovely piece of music to go with it. Don't you wish that you could make music like that? Well you can.

It's tempting to steal other people's music off of bulletin boards, demos and so on. But wait, don't touch that dial.

The tracker programs you need to make beautiful music are all public domain, with the exception of certain versions of MED which are what they call "licenceware".

These disks costs a bit more than PD disks, but the author of the program gets a royalty every time the program is sold. They almost always feature what we call in the trade a "pattern editor" like you find on most modern drum machines and certain Midi sequencers.

The sounds in trackers are always samples, like the kind you can make with your own sound sampler, with the exception again of MED which also uses the sound chip in the Amiga to create synthesised sounds, what we call "chip music".

Most trackers come with disks of sounds for you to get started. The way they work is that you assemble patterns, short sequences of music lasting for 64 beats.

Make a chain

Then when you've made a pattern for your verse, chorus and other fill-ins etc, you chain them all together to make a complete piece of music.

You specify which pattern you'd like to play and in what order, and the program plays each pattern in turn to make meaningful music. Sometimes.

So for example you could have an intro on pattern 1, a verse on pattern 2, a chorus on pattern 3 and a fill-in on pattern 4.

The real kick of a pattern-based sequencer is that you only have to input your patterns once and then they can be played and arranged as many times as you like, rather than a more linear system which would mean you'd have to type the tune in every time.

Creating pleasant music with a tracker is easy, as you can have four tracks (in some cases even eight with programs like OctaMED Professional) and you can put the notes in one at a time in what we call "step time", or play along with the other tracks live on the keyboard in what is termed "real time".

Step time is easier for learners as you can fiddle about with each track of the pattern until it sounds right, like typing words into a wordprocessor and editing them until the spelling and syntax is perfect.

Once a piece of tracker music has been made, or produced, you can convert it to Amos ABK format and load it into a program or into a bank in Direct mode. The Amos disks contain many different converters to serve most of the different kinds of tracker such as Noisetracker, Soundtracker, StarTrekker, Protracker, Games Music Creator, Sonix and so on.

All you do is run these very clever little Amos programs and they read in a tracker file and spit out a ABK file onto disk ready to be loaded.

Some of these programs work fine, but the problem is that so many of the tracker programs (being in the PD for some time now) have all been revamped and re-written so that they are very different in format from the originals.

Some tracker tunes will not play properly once they've been converted. Usually the reason is that the samples are too long or the system has changed.

Either the tracker has a pattern length which is variable and not fixed at 64, or it stores its samples in a different way. Luckily, there are ways around this – see the programs documented in the box on this page for some ideas.

Do try to cultivate the use of tracker programs. You'll find they are not as hard to use as you might think, and the results will be all your own work, rather than just a steal from someone else.

Pro users take note

Lucky users of Amos Professional will know that, of course, Amos Pro is able to use files from MED and Noisetracker (and its various clones) directly using libraries and features built in to the program.

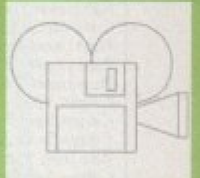
If you are using Amos Pro you don't need to use a converter or any of the programs mentioned. You do however need a copy of MED or Noisetracker to make the music in the first place.

I should also say that the most up to date version of MED isn't in the public domain, but is available as licenceware, where the author gets a fee each time the program is bought.

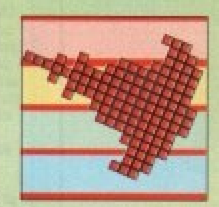
You can get information about MED from Amiganuts United, 169 Dale Valley Road, Hollybrook, Southampton. Tel: (0703) 785680.

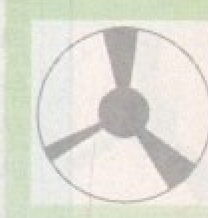
Write stuff

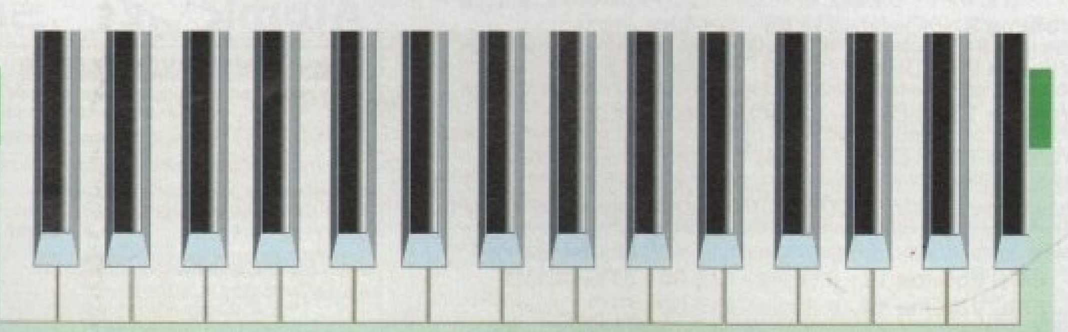
If you have an Amos question, then please write to Phil South, Amos Column, Amiga Computing, Europa House, Adlington Park, Macclesfield SK10 4NP.











Musical tools

A recent addition to the Deja Vu licenceware library is Music Engine by Paul Townsend (aka Technical Fred Software).

This program lets you use tracker music without having to convert it. What this program provides is an interface between Amos and the Shell.

You can use this to play many different music file formats, and this is done by running an appropriate "player program" which means you can hear the music without having to convert it.

Once you've bought the Music Engine program from Deja Vu, you are free to use the source code, if it's for public domain, shareware or licenceware use, providing of course you acknowledge the source of your source. If you want to use the routines in a piece of commercial software, however, then you have to contact the programmers to arrange a suitable fee.

Music Engine is a very powerful tool, and not just for driving music programs. The trick is a very good one, and although it's handy for music, it's powerful enough to run any program from the Workbench, effectively making your Amos system multitask with other programs.

For more details of Music Engine (disk number LPD79) get in touch with Deja Vu Software, or write direct to: Technical Fred Software, 117 Hilton Lane, Walkden, Worsley, Manchester M28 5TB. Phone or Fax: 061-703 7842.

Another fine program disk from the Amos PD Library is the MED Utils disk, containing a copy of MED v2.13 and some convert utilities to make the SoundTracker modules from MED more palatable to the ST-to-ABK converters. The disk number is APD155.

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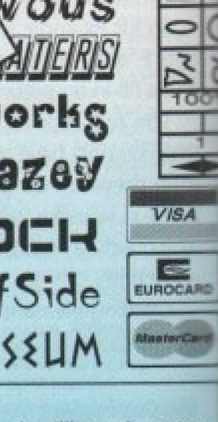
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EMC

Clips ahoy!

Ben Pointer gets into artistic mood

One thing that can really slow down the desktop publishing process is when you have to stop and draw a graphic to illustrate something, especially if you are not too good at pixel painting.

I tend to draw things on paper and then scan them, finding this a much quicker way to achieve what I want than trying to do it with Deluxe Paint or whatever.

But it still takes time, and it would speed things along no end if I had a massive clip art library into which I could dip and pull out an appropriate graphic.

Good Amiga clip art has been hard to find. Many PD libraries have disks full of the stuff, but in my experience 99 per cent of it is unusable, either because it has been poorly drawn in the first place or because the images are so small or of such a low resolution that you can hardly see what they are.

It's encouraging, then, to see more and more dedicated Amiga clip art companies advertising their wares. We're going to look at two collections in this article, both of bitmapped (IFF-ILBM) clip art.

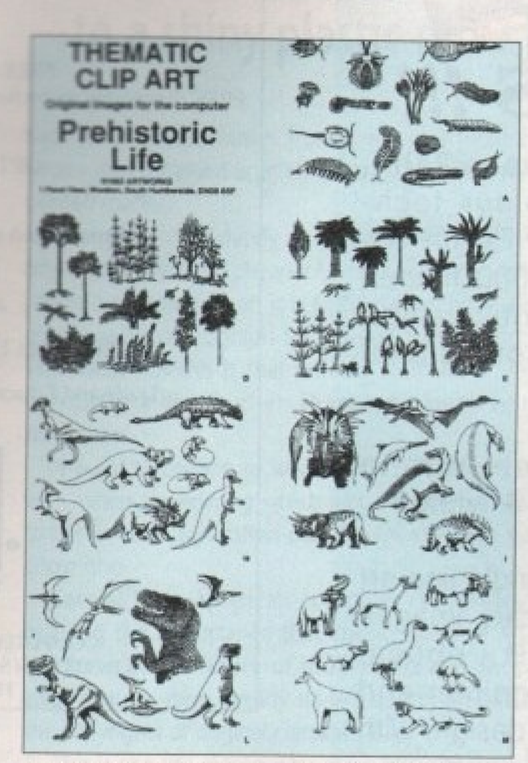
Volumes

The Artworks clip art collection contains more than 1,400 images in total, spread over eight volumes, each disk containing between 115 and 270 images.

Each volume covers a specific theme. Currently these are: Pets; Castles; Cottages & Churches; Trees; Signs & Symbols; Wild Animals; Prehistoric Life; Signs & Symbols II and Weddings & Family Occasions.

Everything is in straight black-and-white, perfect for the mono desktop publisher. The individual images are collected together on a number of pages. To use an image you must load the page into a paint package, cut out the image you require, and save it as a brush. Then you can import it into your DTP package.

All the images have been expertly drawn on a computer – no roughly scanned stuff here. Some are incredibly intricate, like the skeletons on the Prehistoric Life disk and the bouquets of flowers on Weddings & Family Occasions. Others are simpler, like most of the incredibly useful Signs & Symbols.



The Artworks collection contains some of the highest quality bitmapped clip art I have ever seen

If you were to buy the whole collection at once, it works out to an average of less than 4p per image – buy a single disk and they work out at between 3p and 6p each, depending on which disk you buy.

Jaggies

If I have one criticism it is that on the whole the individual images tend to be too small. Most have to be published at quite a small size in order to get rid of the bitmap jaggies – scale them up large and, like all low resolution bitmaps, they look awful.

But most of the time you don't tend to use this king of clip art large, so I guess it's the old swings and roundabouts scenario again – if the images were larger you wouldn't get so many on a disk, and consequently they would end up costing more each.

Unlike a lot of clip art collections I have seen, 99 per cent of Artworks' stuff is extremely high quality with respect to perspective, scale and detail.

Perhaps the only area where there is room for improvement is with the few images that feature people's faces, which don't contain much character.

But I'm picking nits. This collection is certainly very good value for money, and is highly recommended.

The images in the Magic Clip-Art collection have been anti-aliased around the black outlines so that the jaggies are less evident when printed

The Magic Clip-Art Company has come up with an idea to try to reduce the bitmap jaggies. Although all the images in its collection are basically black-and-white, they have all been subtly blended with greyscales around the black outlines (called "anti-aliasing") so that when they are printed the jaggies are not so evident.

There are 23 disks currently available, grouped into seven subjects. Because these are 16 colour pictures, each disk contains only between 18 and 26 images, but each image has been saved individually so you don't have to bother loading them into a painting package to cut out brushes.

Whimsical Animals, 94 images on four disks, are cute cartoons of animals, usually with a large white space left free where some text can be added.

This kind of stuff is of limited use and tends to get tired quickly when use a lot, but on the plus side the images are quite large, and are very well drawn.

Well drawn

Three disks of Funny Attention Getters (76 images) are along the same lines as the Whimsical Animals – well drawn cartoon images with white spaces for text.

The 86-image Sports collection comes on four disks and features action snapshots from most popular sporting activities, and a few that aren't so popular.

These real-life images aren't so expertly drawn as the aforementioned cartoons, and a few of the athletes look positively unathletic.

But if you are producing a sporty newsletter, you'll find them useful enough. The Recreation collection is really an extension of Sports, another 79 images on four disks.

Finally there's Silhouettes, 70 on three disks. Subject matter varies greatly here, from sport to animals to shopping to weddings.

The anti-aliasing does indeed help to reduce the apparent jagginess of the images when printed large, although if printed very large everything tends to have a fuzzy look around the edges. Printed small they look fine.

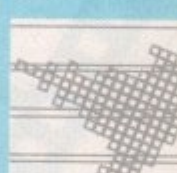
Cost per image averages out at about 25p each, making them a tad expensive compared to the Artworks collection. But then these are larger images, so you are able to publish them larger without the jaggies getting too bad.

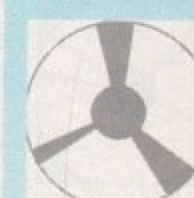
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Developing CDTV

Ever wondered how software gets from an Amiga to a shiny plastic disk? Julius Alexander explains

Since multimedia became a buzzword some years back, much play has been made of the huge investment needed before development can even begin.

Yet on the Amiga CD-ROM development is surprisingly easy and relatively cheap. Indeed I know of at least one developer who, refreshingly and contrary to traditional marketing wisdom, is quite proud to explain how their development is carried out in a bedroom!

CDTV software development consists of several distinct phases. Firstly any graphics (moving or still frame) and sound must be "captured" and stored in digital form, enabling them to be manipulated and stored by the Amiga/CDTV.

Secondly, the actual software is written – digital data and software are closely integrated to the extent that until the format and nature of the files that hold the graphics is known, software development is limited.

These two stages are typically done on standard Amiga systems, albeit are accelerated and equipped with some serious capacity hard drives. The software is written and tested as normal Amiga software until it is finished.

Third-party

The next stage is the movement of the software and images to CD-ROM. This is done by a third-party company who return a single master CD.

With this master, final testing is done. Believe it or not, until this stage, the application will never have been loaded or used on a CD-ROM! Typically this master CD-ROM will contain some errors and the software will need be tweaked and a new master created.

Once this testing is complete, the master is sent to Commodore US for approval. Having finally passed all the testing, it is sent off for duplication. Then it finds its way to the shops for selling.

Just now I explained that the images and sound are "captured". This makes it sound a lot simpler than it really is. Image capture and sound capture are a specialist area in their own right.

In its most basic form you could use a standard Amiga sound sampler for audio data, a video digitiser to grab still frames from a moving picture source and a flatbed scanner (Sharp, Datel etc) for printed matter.

Strangely – and purely as a sideline – it is actually a lot simpler and cheaper to capture images for use in a computer than it is to digitally reproduce an image or photograph for commercial printing. The reason for this is that printing resolutions are currently a lot higher than typical screen resolutions.

A point of caution to wanna-be CDTV developers – when considering which pictures and sounds to use in your application play careful attention to copyrights.

Several large American computer companies, realising the importance that classic works of art will have in the future of multimedia and their value as such, have already started buying (in bulk) the copyrights of original classics!

This is also the reason why companies like Sony, with their huge libraries of commercial films and records, are so valuable as developers of multimedia applications.

Next month I'll take a detailed look at the actual software that is available for development purposes. But to round this month off, here's a quick taster.

For actual software development there are a great number of programming languages available which can be used. For the fastest programs you can't beat assembler (which is the "native language" of the CDTV and Amiga).

Cryptic

Unfortunately writing programs in this native language is not easy, with commands being cryptic and far more work being required to write assembler programs than other languages. But if you're a perfectionist and want the fastest programs, you can't beat it.

For the more light-hearted, there are a growing number of software tools which allow you to write applications using English-like instructions. One of the most popular development tools of this kind is Amos. This program allows Amiga software to be written easily and simply.

Another easy development package is Scala, which is brilliant if you can't program but want to create multimedia applications.

It's older brother Scala MM is considerably more powerful but has limitations in that you can't produce standalone applications that can be give away.

These four programs are my firm favourites for multimedia development, but there are also a lot more (some better, some not) and next month I'll be taking a look at these.

For those wishing to start development, it's probably first worth looking at some of the many CDTV titles now available, testing them and generally playing around with them – alternatively you could always read the review of CDTV software in this very issue.

In this way, you can find out the mistakes, errors and also the good points that other developers have made, and in doing so save yourself making the same errors, or incorporate the nice features you've found in your own programs.

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Scala is ideal for quick multimedia development





Next month: As the multimedia race between Philips and Commodore hots up, we look at the latest developments in the fast-moving world of CDTV

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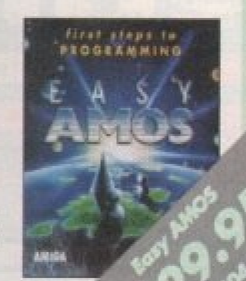
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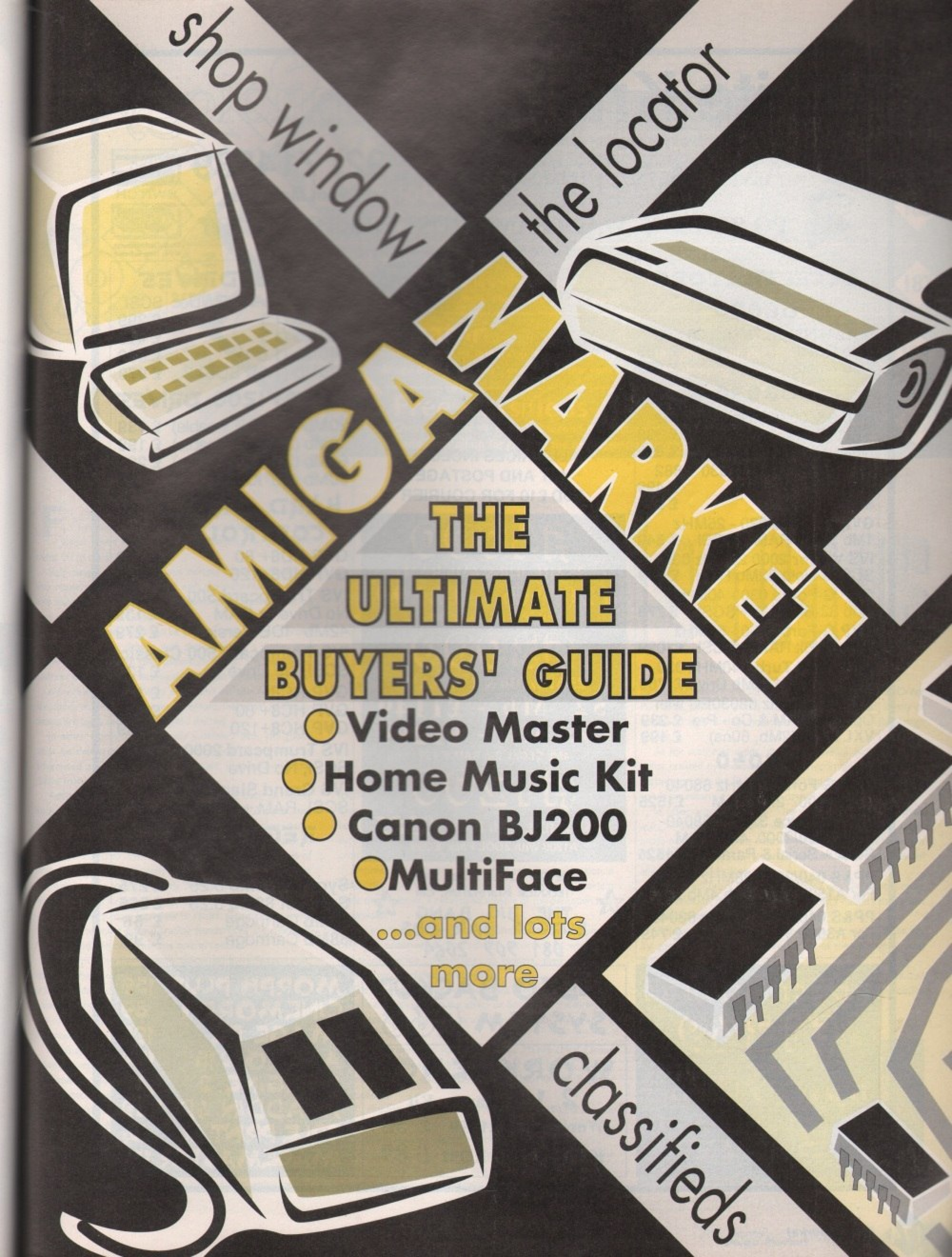
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Dodgy dealings

What do you do when a mail order company takes the money and runs?

From the evidence of our recent mail order survey, far too many readers have suffered the ultimate mail order rip-off when, having paid in advance for goods, the items fail to materialise.

Surprisingly, your answers also indicate that few of our regular readers take the matter up with the authorities, presumably either because they resign themselves to the situation, or they are unsure about their rights.

Consumer protections can be broken down into two broad categories – those dealing with the advertiser's duties, and those concerned with the customer's rights. The two often overlap, but it is always best to simplify such a complex subject.

Advertisers have a duty according to the Advertising Standards Authority guidelines to ensure that their advertisements are legal, decent, honest, and truthful.

In other words, if they specify a delivery date, the goods must be delivered within the specified time. If a product is advertised as having certain properties, it must match the claims made for it.

Additionally, any special conditions stated, such as money back offers, delivery options (courier, same day dispatch, and so on) or "guaranteed satisfaction" claims must be adhered to.

Few Amiga owners seem to realise that if a company fails to deliver within their own deadline or a reasonable period of time (28 days is the normally accepted period), the customer can write to the company stating that the goods are no longer wanted and that a refund is required.

The company has a legal duty to return the money as it will have failed to meet normal trading standards. If the money is not returned, the consumer has several options.

First, writing to the company concerned by registered post, detailing the date of the advertisement, the goods ordered, price, and date when the order was posted or telephoned, the customer should make the strongest possible complaint about the company's poor service. There is little point in pussy-footing around when a company fails to deliver.

If this approach fails to elicit a satisfactory response, such as a firm promise to deliver the goods within a certain time, the customer should take the matter further. Far too many people seem determined to waste their own time and energy in protracted postal arguments with companies who have already shown themselves to be untrustworthy.

Remember, though, that if an alternative offer is made and the customer accepts it, all bets are off and you must wait until the agreed time elapses.

Step two is to consult a consumer advisor, either at the local Citizens' Advice Bureau or Trading Standards office. Experts at these offices will be happy to offer advice on the best way to proceed in your particular case, and a letter from such an organisation to the guilty party might be enough to prompt some action.

Depending on whether the guilty company or publication in which the advertisement appeared is a member of certain trade organisations, a recognised scheme of compensation may be available.

For example, the Periodical Publishers' Association runs its own mail order protection scheme according to which the monthly magazine compensates its readers, then claims the money from the defaulting company.

The scheme is expensive and is not used by many monthly magazines as it relies on the ability or honesty of the directors of companies to meet the personal promises they make to the publishers.

Other protection schemes include MOPS (Mail Order Protection Scheme) run by many national daily papers, and the code of practice insisted upon by the Mail Order Traders' Association.

If a company is a member of MOTA, any complaints about a company's bad faith should be addressed to the organisation, which will investigate alleged breaches of the code.

Companies sporting MOTA's symbol will normally be of the more reputable variety and less likely to rip off their customers, but the more safety nets there are, the better. A similar code of practice is enforced by the Association of Mail Order Publishers (AMOP), but as this organisation consists mostly of book and record clubs, it doesn't figure greatly in the Amiga market.

As for customer rights, there are several. Apart from the rights created by the duties imposed upon trading companies, customers have the little-publicised right to a full refund if the goods are returned within seven days of delivery.

In other words, if a hard drive was advertised as "lightning quick" – a nondescript claim which it would be difficult to either prove or refute – and the customer found it to be less than so in his or her opinion, a full refund could be claimed regardless of any other considerations.

This is a statutory right and one which no company can overturn. In addition, the customer can insist on a delivery date when a product is ordered.

If the company agrees to this, the customer can refuse to pay for goods if they arrive late, regardless of the company's usual delivery times.

Forcing the full extent of the law and consumer rights on mail order companies is the only way to force the unreliable outfits to get their houses in order.

Useful numbers

Mail Order Traders' Association: 051-227 4181
Mail Order Protection Scheme: 071-405 6806
Periodical Publishers' Association: 071-379 6268

Check also with directory enquiries for your local Trading Standards Office.

Shop Window

The team round up an exciting collection of goodies that'll have you hammering those credit cards...

Home Music Kit

Picture this scenario. You are a bit of a music buff. You're sat down at home on a Sunday, twiddling your thumbs. Harry Secombe is screaming his head off on Highway and you are bored with a capital "B".

What you need is something to occupy yourself with. What could be better than escaping off to your Amiga and laying down some music tracks?

Alas, you have no music package. You are also a bit of a beginner when it comes to the actual making of music.

What you really need is a sampler to be really cheeky and nick loads of samples from other top pop/rock/rave musicians. A sequencer and a sound processor would come in handy as well.

Unfortunately you'd need some really expensive kit to make the kind of sounds you want, so what are you going to do about it? Well, a package that might suit your needs is the Home Music Kit by Power Computing.

There are two main parts to the Home Music Kit. Real Time Sound Processor 2 is one and Digital Sound 3 is the other. Real Time Sound Processor allows you to add special effects to your music while the digital sound studio lets you create your own music by putting together various parts of different songs, and remixing them to your own needs.

Apart from the software there is also the hardware. This is the stereo sound digitiser which fits smartly into the parallel port of your Amiga and is only slightly larger than your average bar of soap.

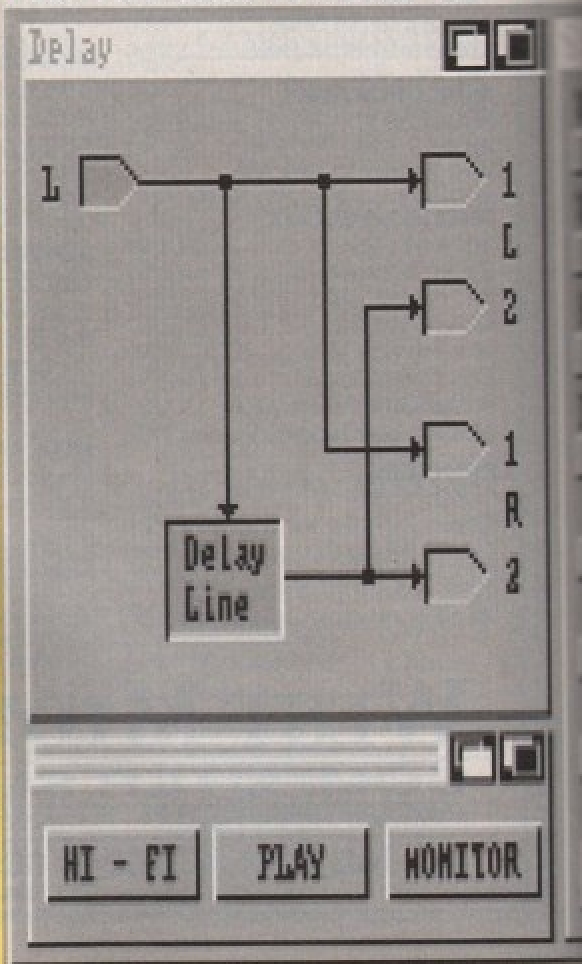
Before you start to create the tunes you want, you can to change the sounds by adding special effects to them – but only if you want to. You can sample whatever you want, but by adding the special effects you can add your own personal touch to the music.

The screen of Real Time Sound Processor consists of three windows. The first is the adjustment window which allows you to change the parameters relative to the current effect. Each parameter has a slider which allows you to change the values.

The next window is the logic window. This represents the parameters graphically in a logic diagram window. This will allow you to see at which moment the parameters will start influencing the sound. It's not entirely useful, but is very educational.

The last window is the control window. This allows you to listen to the sound transformed by the special effect, and you do this by clicking on the Play button.

There are another two buttons in the window. One is the Monitor button, the other the Hi–Fi button. Monitor allows you to listen to the sound directly without any effects – very handy if you keep on flicking between the Play and Monitor buttons to hear exactly how the sound has changed.



The Hi–Fi button lets you activate or de–activate the audio filter of the Amiga.

There are 32 special effects to choose from. These range from simple echoing effects to a stereo phaser to choruses to flanges to just about any effect you can think of.

If you have enough memory you can have up to 10 effects loaded in the memory simultaneously. Another helpful option

Video Master

It is usually a foregone conclusion that when different pieces of hardware are combined into a single package it's going to be a load of rubbish. Video Master is the exception to the rule. It is, in short, probably the best piece of hardware for the A500 that I have seen this year.

Video Master is described as an integrated multimedia video and audio sampler which is a bit of a mouthful, but it is what it says and it does one hell of a job.

The hardware itself is just a box that you plug into the side of your 500. This is where you plug your audio and video sources in. Setting it up is a doddle – just slot in the box and off you go.

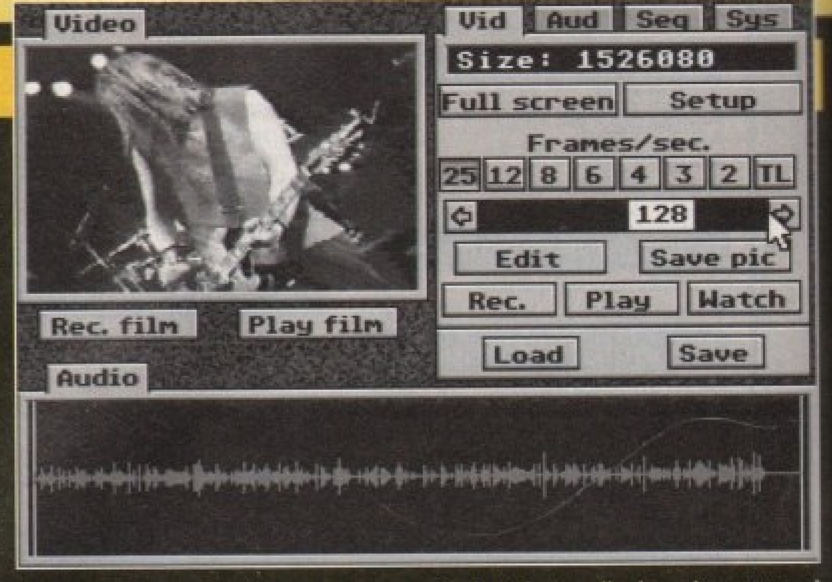
Plug your video source directly into the box – you don't need an extra TV screen to monitor the video source because the software copes very well, but I'll explain about that later.

When the software is booted up you can choose the sampler, the digitiser or the sequencer. Firstly I had a play with the digitiser.

The source monitor is a 3in by 5in box in the top left-hand corner of the screen, and with this you can watch the video image and get it to where you want to grab from.

When your video image is where you want it, you just click on the record button and off you go. The length of the film you grab depends on the amount of memory, but don't let that put you off.

I was using a bog standard A500 1Mb and I was getting a good 10 to 15 seconds of film at 25 frames per second. If you want you can grab at a slower frame rate to get more film time.



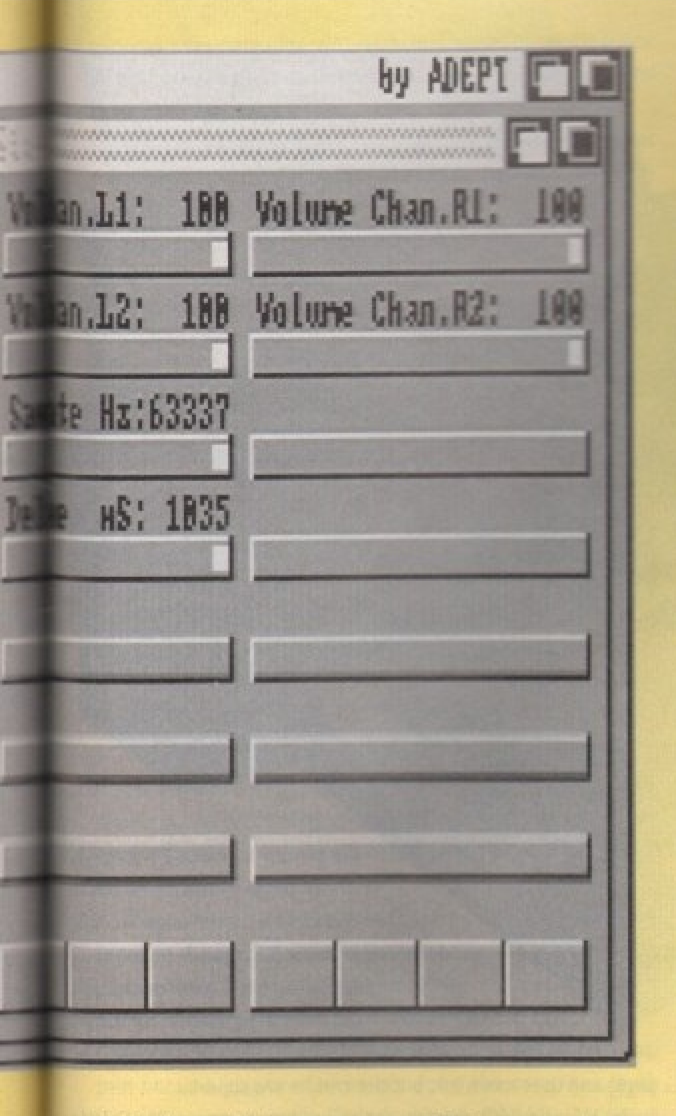
You can put the film rates to a practical use. For example if you take a ten-second sample at 12 frames/sec then play it at 25 frames/sec it will obviously become faster on the playback.

Nothing can describe the playback you get after you have grabbed the video image. It's absolutely wonderful. The image is crisp and the frames run as smooth as silk. You must bear in mind that the images are greyscale but that really doesn't matter – I was completely gobsmacked.

After you have grabbed the film you can do all manner of strangeries to it. If you click on the screen control button Tint you can grab the film in any one of six colour shades. Alternatively you can colour individual frames.

The aspect of the video section I was most





is the facility to link the program to a Midi instrument.

This way you can modify the sounds coming out of your Midi instrument, so one of your pre–set sounds can be altered in 32 different ways.

If making music starts getting a bit boring and you feel like a break, then why not try hooking up a microphone to the sound processor? You can now sound like a Dalek or as if you're in a concert hall. Try to keep a straight face while shouting "exterminate" I can guarantee you'll collapse in a fit of giggles. Not very proper I know, but fun is one of the main reasons for making music! So, you've had your fun, now back to the business of making music using the Digital Studio.

You can either load up an altered sample or record a brand new one without any effects on it. Before you record a sample you must first set the frequency (rate) and size of it.

The rate range is in hertz – the higher the hertz the better quality sample, the lower the worst. The size allows you to set how long the sample will be in seconds. You can also set the autostart on or off. This tells the program to wait for a sound signal before it records.

Once you've recorded the sample, you will need to edit it. You can now delete, cut, copy, paste, add, invert and swap the sample. There are a few more options, but there isn't room to explain them all in detail.

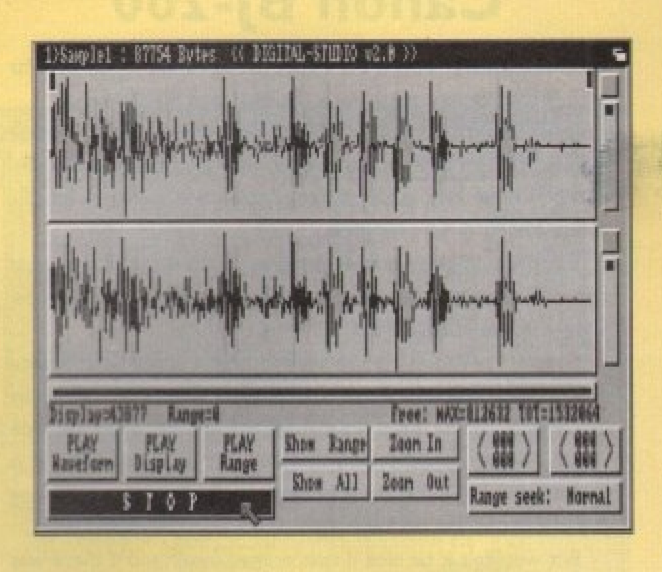
Probably the most important part for making actual music is the sequencer. This allows you to sequence your samples in a certain order to create a piece of music.

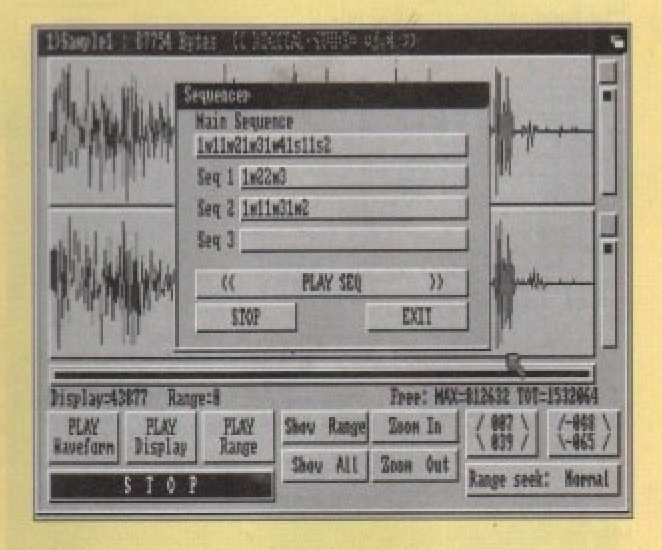
Depending on memory allowances you can carry up to ten samples at any one time. Now when making your tune, these samples won't go very far, so the best idea is to find music that will loop easily, so it's a lot easier to sample some rave/techno band than one of Jimi Hendrix's solos.

Even though the sequencer is the most important part of the package, it is not like normal sequencers. You have to actually type in some execution commands to tell the computer which sample you want playing where and so forth. It is very strange at first, but after a while you'll soon get used to it.

The Home Music Kit does have its faults, like the strange sequencer and the fact that sometimes the effects don't sound right with certain types of music, but it does have its plus points. The package is extremely friendly and fun to use.

You will need to spend a couple of weeks on it before you get really competent, and you might want to buy a separate sampler and sequencer to make your music that way instead, but if you want an all-in-one package then the Home Music Kit could well be worth taking a look at.





Supplier: Power Computing
Phone: 0234 843388
Price: £49.95

impressed with was the grabber. The quality of the images were better than the image grabber we use here at AC towers!

As per usual you can view the image in any of the usual modes – interlaced, non-lace and hi-res. The grabs may only be greyscales but the clarity is brilliant. All images save as standard IFFs or ANIMs for use in other packages.

Next I looked at the sampler. I thanked my lucky stars, it's actually easy to use. All the other samplers I have looked at in the last six months require a degree in sound engineering to use. With Video Master you have simple record, play, and listen buttons for basic work, on top of which there are fader controls, reverses and invert options which let you fiddle with the original sound.

Because the film and sound are both competing for the memory you only have a limited amount of space, so the sampler has a squash option that lets you squeeze the sample to half its original size.

This action does mean the sample loses half of its clarity but the sample quality is a pretty high in the first place. To make the sample smaller from the start you can reduce the sample rate. The highest rate possible is 16kHz which gives pretty good results, but the lower you put the sample rate the lower the quality.

The sequencer is one of the most advanced I've seen but that is still a damn sight easier to use than any other sequencer I've used, including the Home Music Kit.

It has all the basic trick elements for the film and audio section like film loopers so that a relatively short piece of film will seem like a very long one.



Last but not least is the system card. This is a fantastic idea that I have never seen on any of the other sampler or digitiser packages. It allow you to configure how much memory you wish to use on the sampler and the digitiser respectively.

You change the values by using a simple + and - sign. So if you are dealing with very simple images on the digitiser it leaves you more memory to play with on the sampler.

I can't really say everything about Video Master in this small review, but if you are into images and sound sampling I recommend that you check out Video Master for yourself.

Supplier: Microdeal
Phone: 0726 68020
Price: £69.95

Canon BJ-200

Canon's bubblejet printers have proved to be extremely popular with Amiga owners, particularly the BJ-10 and BJ-20 models.

There are three obvious reasons why they are liked so much – they produce high quality results, they are inexpensive compared to other high quality inkjet printers, and there are specific Amiga printer drivers for them.

But these low-end bubblejets are a bit slow, printing text at about 80 characters per second (cps) in high quality (HQ) mode, about 100 cps in high speed (HS) mode.

Graphics printouts also sometimes have a banded appearance – dark horizontal lines every quarter of an inch or so, caused by every pass of the print head overlapping the previous one slightly. The extent of the banding depends on exactly what it is you are printing, but these are faults you can forgive, considering the low cost of the printers.

But wouldn't it be nice if text printed faster and if there was no banding?

The BJ-200 is the latest in Canon's mono bubblejet range. Designed for desktop use, it weighs just over 6lb and measures a compact 13.7in wide, 7.6in deep and 6.8in high.

Sticking up at the rear of the printer is a cut sheet feeder that can take about 80 sheets. Ordinary A4 paper is fine, but the feeder is wide enough to take anything up to 9.5in wide, so envelopes can be fed through it as well. The feeder works with paper from 64 to 90 gms, manually-fed individual sheets can be up to 105 gms.

Overhead projector transparencies can also be used, but you need to feed sheets of this through one at a time.

The BJ-200 is the first of Canon's bubblejets to feature the new 16-bit processor and a control that actively seeks the next print position. The print head, which is part of the disposable ink cartridge, has also been redesigned.

These new features have resulted in much faster text printing and greater accuracy with graphics dumps.

In HS or draft mode the BJ-200 can whizz along at 248 cps – in HQ mode it can do 173 cps. In real terms these figures mean that a page of 10 cpi (pica) text printed in HS will come out of the printer in about 20 seconds – or three pages a minute to put it another way. The same page in HQ mode will take about 30 seconds to print.

Something else that's new to the BJ-200 is SHQ mode – Super High Quality. This slows down the text output to 124 cps (about 40 seconds per page) and uses more ink, but the results are superb.

In HS and HQ modes graphics dumps are still slightly banded, although nowhere near as much as with earlier bubblejets. In SHQ mode, however, graphics banding is a thing of the past, even on ordinary bond or photocopier paper.

The results on proper inkjet paper are stunning – every bit as good as a laser printer, and in some cases arguably better.

The BJ-200 has two emulations – BJ-10 and Epson LQ. In BJ-10 mode there are two typefaces available, Prestige and Courier; in Epson mode there are eight – Roman, Sans Serif, Courier, Prestige, Script, Orator, Orator-S and Draft.

BJ-10 mode is better for graphics printouts, Epson mode gives you more text flexibility.

A small control panel on the top of the printer enables you to select between HS, HQ and SHQ printing modes, as well as the normal Power, Online and LF/FF switches.

Typefaces and character sets are selected via dip switches which are positioned under a small cover to the left of the control panel.

On the front of the printer is a cover which pulls forward to







320x512 HAM images, printed with Canon Studio

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15cpi Mode Print
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17cpi Mode Print
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The new Canon's internal fonts produce clean, crisp fonts

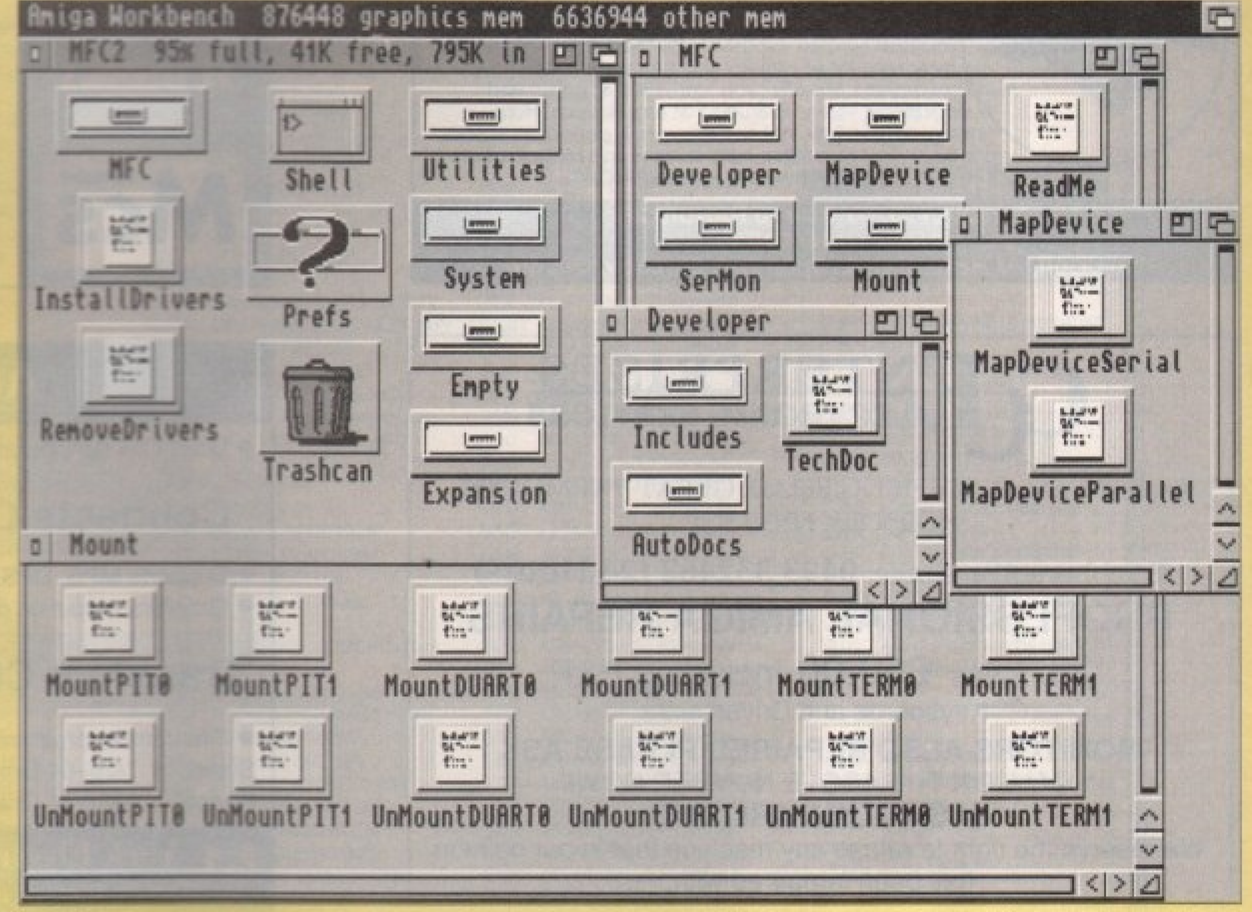
allow you access to the ink cartridge. Embossed on the inside of this cover is guide to dip switch settings for both BJ-10 and Epson modes.

Without going anywhere near the manual I was able to set the switches various ways to get various results. It isn't difficult to do.

Although the BJ-200's recommended retail price is more than £400, I'm sure you'll see it selling for just over £300. The trick is to shop around.

Keep in mind that printers are not computer-specific, so it will be well worth investing in a PC magazine to find a greater range of dealers.

Supplier: Canon (UK) Ltd
Phone: 0800 252223
Price: £468 (but shop around!)



Despite its apparent technical complexity, the MultiFaceCard is easy to set up and the software is simple to use

MultiFaceCard

If you are into expanding you Amiga with stuff like printers, scanners, modems, digitisers and samplers, then you very quickly learn that the Amiga doesn't have enough holes in it to take them all at once.

Most of these kind of peripherals plug into either the serial or the parallel port – a common combination of kit is a printer and a hand scanner, or a printer and a sampler, or a printer and a hand scanner and a sampler.

Chopping and changing between peripherals can be a real pain because you have to power down the computer, swap kit, and power up again. Only fools and rich kids plug things into the serial and parallel ports while the Amiga is switched on.

The answer of course is more holes, and that's what the MultiFaceCard gives you – two more parallel ports and two more serial ports.

The model currently available is a half-length card that fits into one of the Zorro II slots in the Amiga 1500, 2000, 3000 or 4000. An Amiga 500 and 500 Plus model is planned, which will fit into the expansion port (with a through port), but it has not yet been built.

The ports themselves are on the end of four cables that connect to two standard brackets that screw into the holes provided at the rear of the computer. Each bracket has one serial and one parallel port on it. To save space the serial connectors are of the 9-pin type, which is the standard in the IBM world – serial cables with 9-pin connectors are readily available, but if you fancy making your own the manual details the pin-outs for 9-pin to 9-pin and 9-pin to 25-pin.

It also tells you how to wire a null modem cable in order to connect two Amigas for data transfer.

The parallel ports are standard Amiga, with +5V on pin 14 as normal so that samplers, for example, can draw their power from the Amiga.

The software is simple to set up. The manual describes the procedure clearly, although beginners might be a bit frightened by all the talk of devices and mountlists.

But it's quite painless, and the whole system can be set up to auto-configure upon booting, or you can leave everything switched off and click on icons to turn various ports on and off when you require them.

Should you prefer using the CLI, then there's a MapDevice command that can turn any or all of the four extra ports on and off.

The software is fully multitasking, so it's perfectly possible, for example, to be printing something and scanning something and sampling something all at the same time, although you'll appreciate that this takes memory and will obviously slow down each process by a certain amount.

The question to ask yourself is if not having to keep powering down to swap kit is worth £149. It certainly is to me.



Add more ports to your machine with the MultiFace Card

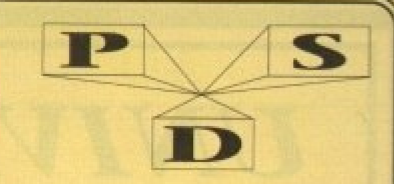
Supplier: Gasteiner Technologies
Phone: 081-365 1151
Price: £149



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Software spotlight

Every month, we examine in brief a selection of the best software on offer. This time around, the critical eye falls on databases and spreadsheets

Databases

Prodata 1.2

A fast, visually uninspiring, but powerful database with quick searches, good formatting and password features, and a variety of powerful options, Prodata is the best choice for general home and business use for those unwilling to spend the extra on Superbase Pro 4.

Prodata is a little less friendly than it could be and has no support for graphics or sound within records, but it is an excellent workhorse and will suffice for most jobs. Users who prefer wysiwyg packages, or who insist on user-friendliness, would be advised to skip this one.

Supplier: Arnor
Phone: 0733 68909
Price: £99.95

Superbase Professional 4

This package does everything, end of story. Superbase Pro 4 (SB4) is a monster of a program with a huge manual and its own built in programming language. The latest version, due for release soon, will even enable users to produce standalone databases for use at customer information points and so on in exactly the same way as dBase and other high-end PC packages.

SB4 already has its Database Management Language (DML) similar to the SQLs found in PC packages, so the expert user can produce extremely complex reports full of calculations, cross referencing, and so on.

In addition, the package is stuffed with class touches and is easily the most visually awe-inspiring business package available for the Amiga.

Graphics and sound can be incorporated in a record to be played or displayed at the click of a user-defined button, palettes and displays can be customised to the heart's content, and there are VCR-style controls, menus, and a host of clear requesters to aid user friendliness.

SB4 is the expert's choice, and the first stop for business users, but it is very expensive and definitely not recommended for the average user.

Supplier: Oxxi Inc
Phone: 0753 551888
Price: £299

AmiBase Pro III

Originally developed from a shareware program, AmiBase Professional III has been souped up and released as a budget commercial release in much the same way as PowerPacker III was. The program still looks like shareware, but it is a deceptively powerful little beast which beats some of the expensive packages in more than one area.

Regular readers of *Amiga Computing* will already have AmiBase Professional II, distributed on our CoverDisk last year, so vIII will come as no surprise to them.

It is quite fast, has good search and filtering options, and is easy to use via the button controls supplied for most functions.

It even has support for graphics which the user can attach to a record then view through the good offices of PPShow.

Serious users will give this one a miss, but at the price it's well worth a look.

Supplier: Amiganuts United
Fax: 0703 785680
Price: £10

Spreadsheets

Professional Calc

Easily the most appealing spreadsheet to look at (a job hard enough in itself), ProCalc is also one of the more powerful. Developed by Gold Disk, the makers of ProDraw and ProPage, the package is slick, well presented, fairly easy to use, and fits well with the rest of the company's range.

Worksheets can be laid out in a range of fonts and text effects for maximum impact, then output to a PostScript printer, and there are several options for the generation of graphs and charts to aid presentation of your data.

All graphs can be created as IFFs for on-screen viewing, or output as ProDraw clips for use in either ProDraw or ProPage.

With the direct ARexx hotlink between ProPage 3.0 and ProCalc, this package has to be the first choice for those with an eye to visual impact.

Supplier: HB Marketing
Phone: 0753 686000
Price: £129.96

K Spread 4

This has to be the first choice for business users, by virtue of the massive range of features Kuma have crammed into it. K Spread 4 has the most extensive range of power features of any Amiga spreadsheet and the most import/export options.

The package will accept Lotus 1-2-3 data, Data Interchange Format (DIF), and straight Ascii data tables, so it is ideal for Amiga owners with PCs at the office who want to do some serious work at home.

Not as slick or easy to use as ProCalc, K-Spread is nonetheless a well put together program with plenty of menu and keyboard short-cut controls, and if you can get over the GEM-style desktop (a throwback to the program's original ST version) it is the obvious business buy.

Supplier: HiSoft
Phone: 0525 718181
Price: £105.75

DGCalc

An old and mostly superseded program, DGCalc is for those with basic spreadsheet requirements and very little else. It has no graphics support, little in the way of special features, and looks appalling.

Having thus dismissed it, the program still does the job of crunching numbers, and as long as you don't expect anything fancy – calculating the monthly household budget is about as far as it should be allowed to go – it's a decent buy at the price.

Supplier: Digita
Price: £39.95
Phone: 0395 270273

PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALL MASTERS

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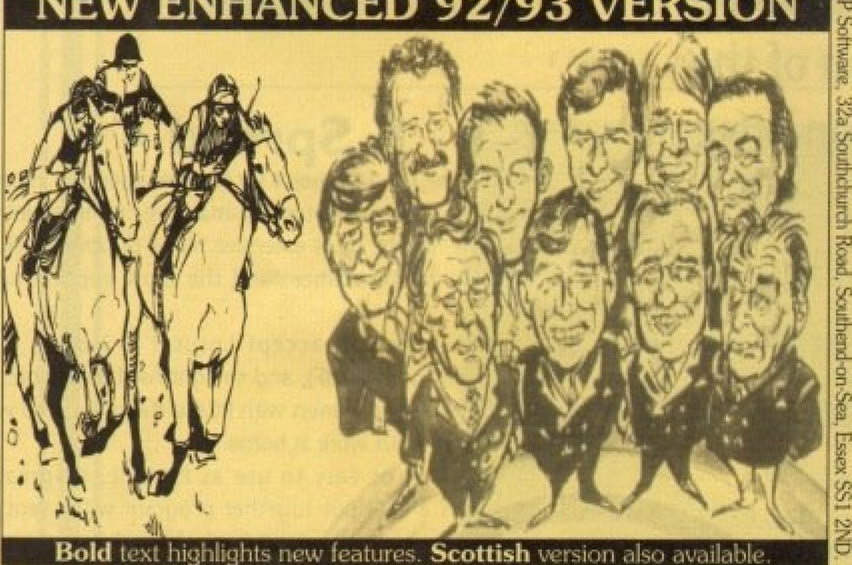
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Quick game data load and save. All screens updated quickly and displayed in a pleasant format, which is easy to use and comfortable to read. Fully mouse operated. Printed instruction booklet with plenty of diagrams. An Editor is available (as an extra) to add flexibility to the new or saved games.

An options screen allows some of the above to be switched off if so desired. Others not mentioned above include **Show All Goalscorers** (when possible) and **Show Transfer News**.

NEW ENHANCED 92/93 VERSION



Bold text highlights new features. **Scottish** version also available.

ESP Software, 32a Southchurch Road, Southend-on-Sea, Essex SS1 2ND.

There are many, many other little things that make this game the most addictive and accurate interpretation of a Football Managers season. It would be impossible to list all the features in this advert but we assure you that this is the best. We have thousands of satisfied customers from our previous edition of this game, many are still playing it 2 years after purchase. See the order form below for details on how to order this incredible game. Available for all Atari ST's and Amiga's. PC WINDOWS version coming soon. November 1992.

WRESTLING MASTERS

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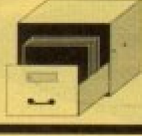
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HARD TIMES

The A500 hard disk guide. All you'll ever need to know in a nutshell...

GVP A500 HD+

If you're going to start anywhere, why not with one of the best? As is usually the case with GVP hardware their HD+ series is both fast, reliable, flexible and thanks to a recent slash in price a lot more affordable than you might imagine.

If quality counts you can't go far wrong with a drive that's not only one of fastest on the market but also boasts the option of an additional 8Mb of fast RAM, a SCSI port and a game switch which unlike some doesn't disable the on-board RAM.

As with almost all hard disks there's a whole range of sizes available starting from 40Mb stretching right up to 213. If you're interested in the basic version it will set you back a very reasonable £349 – which is literally a full £100 cheaper than the figure asked on the units initial release.

Supplier: Silica Systems
Phone: 081-309 1111
Price £349 (40Mb unpopulated)

A530 Turbo

As a logical progression to the HD+, the A530 Turbo is a obvious choice. Although physically identical to the aforesaid HD+ the A530 is a different kettle of fish altogether.

Although not strictly just a hard disk it's nevertheless well worth a mention especially for those who take their computing seriously. Like its predecessor the A530 has an identical selection of disk sizes – minus the 40Mb option, a SCSI port plus the option for up to 8Mb of 32-bit RAM.

As you may have guessed thanks to the reference to 32-bit RAM, the unit also boasts the power of a 40MHz 68030 which can be fitted with an optional 68882 co-processor.

When the combination of hard disk, accelerator, FPU and RAM are put together you're dealing with a powerful beast which on pure speed will easily out-gun a standard Amiga 3000.

On top of all of this, both the HD+ and A530 will accept the services of a plug-in Vortex 286 PC emulator which somehow manages to squeeze in among the ever growing band of components.

Supplier: Silica Systems
Price: £849 (basic unit – 80Mb h/drive)
Phone: 081-309 1111

Rössmoller Hard Disk

Or to give it its full title, the Rössmoller 52Mb Quantum. Although the word Quantum is synonymous with quality it must be said that the hardware around it doesn't quite match up. Unlike the majority of drives mentioned, the Rössmoller doesn't have the option of adding any additional RAM. In addition power is provided solely by the Amiga and as a result excessive drain on the machine can be a real problem.

Another minor irritation is that although the drive is a SCSI there's no way of daisy-chaining additional drives to your existing Quantum. Still on the other side of the coin the unit does offer a DMA pass-through which allows you to exploit the services of any other peripherals that take advantage of the side slot.

However it's worth baring in mind this could cause even more power problems if they to are powered solely by the machine.

The drive arrives pre-formatted, so all you have to do is simply add the software of your choice. If you don't want whistles and bells and can live without LEDs the Rössmoller is a respectable bargain basement investment.

Supplier: Sysons Associates
Phone: 081-907 2100
Price: £319

AVS Trumpcard 500AT

Just like the HD+, the AT comes in a very pleasing Amiga-esque moulded plastic case complete with power and access lights.

Like the Rössmoller the AT also arrives minus a PSU, but unlike the aforementioned drive it doesn't appear to suffer from any of the Rössmoller's power problems, even when equipped with a full complement of 8Mb of RAM.

Both the drive and RAM are extremely economic concerning power but even so an option for an external PSU has been added. The reason for this seemingly unnecessary option is the drive's DMA through port.

Like the Rössmoller, the option allows the connection of CD-ROMs and other side slot peripherals without the need to remove your drive – a problem which haunts a lot of the opposition.

With a reasonably quick 52Mb Quantum, up to 8Mb of RAM, DMA pass-through and arguably the best and certainly the easiest installation software on the market, the AT is one of the most attractive options around.

The only problem with a 52Mb AT interface as opposed to the equally spacious SCSI drives offered by the opposition is that of speed and expandability.

Although about average for speed transferring 530k per second, its main downfall is its inability to daisy-chain extra drives- à la SCSI.

If however you think one drive will be more than enough and find DMA access essential the AT is a very attractive option.

Supplier: MicroPace
Phone: 0753 551888
Price: £399 (52Mb unpopulated)

Ashcom ADDHard 45Mb

Last but not least we arrive at a real punter product in the form of Ashcom's ADDHard 45Mb. Not perhaps the most inspiring title even to adorn a drive but if it's value you're after, who cares what it's called?

The drive itself is the ultimate in simplicity – no SCSI port, no RAM expansion, no PSU, just a bargain basement price tag which suits the basic do-the-job design of the drive.

It's small and rather unassuming in comparison to the style of the GVP and AT drives, but still retains a modicum of minimalist dignity.

As you might expect, speed isn't the drives strong point, especially in relation to the dynamic duo of the AT and HD+. Still having said that if you're making your first move from a floppy-based system it's nothing short of blistering.

Like the Rössmoller, the drive comes completely formatted with either Workbench 1.3 or 2 so installation is a simply case of plug-in and you're off.

If you're after a cheap and cheerful introduction to hard disk use without any of the frills offered by the opposition, the Ashcom is just about ideal, especially if you're on a tight budget.

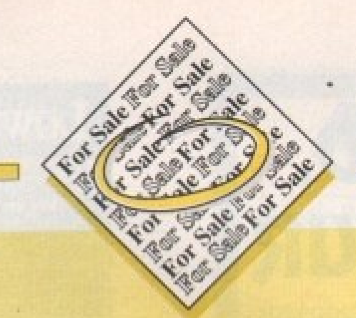
Supplier: Ashcom Design and Developments Ltd
Phone: 0530 411485
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◆ Software sale. Due to financial problems I'm selling up. For lists write to Steve, 5 London Road, Long Sutton, Lincs PE12 9EA.

◆ New Amiga PD Club. Send blank disk to NDAPDC, 50 Northacre Road, Oakwood, Derby DE21 2TN.

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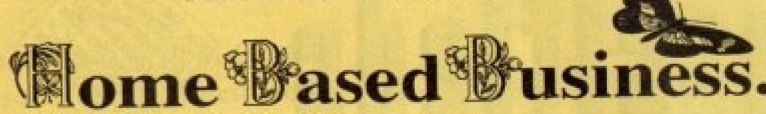
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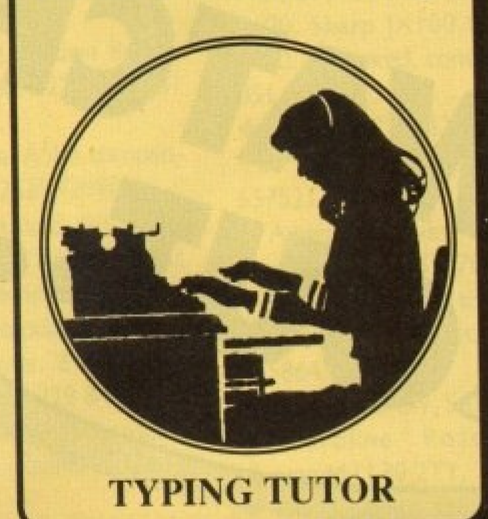
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*3D Animated icons.
*Compatible with Workbench 2.0.
*Both Mono and Stereo sampling.

Real Time Digital Effects include:

ECHO-Adds echo to incoming sound.
PHASER-Applies space age phase shift.
SYNTH-Adds user definable effects.
DIRECT-Plays incoming sound direct.
VIBRATO-Rapidly varies frequency.
STEREO ECHO-Adds digital delay between L & R speakers.

Other Menu's include:

REMIX (with many sampling features).
EDIT (for sample manipulation).
DISK (for saving and loading etc).

Workbench 2.00 Compatible.

£39.95 Inc.

JUST LOOK AT THE SPEC.

American Software (U.S.A.)	(217) 384 2050
Arkofoto (Spain)	(34) 3301 0020
Centresoft (U.K.)	(44) 021 6253388
Darius Soft (Austria)	(43) 123 4555
Gem Distribution (U.K.)	(44) 0279 442842
Goldhill Associates (Export)	(44) 081 9062009
H.B. Marketing (U.K.)	(44) 0753 686000

IMAGE CAPTURE

4096 Colour Images

OVERVIEW

Vidi-Amiga 12 is the ultimate low cost colour digitiser for Amiga. There are no filters and no separate RGB splitter. Colour images can be captured in less than a second, mono images are grabbed in real time. Fully compatible with any video source.

Some of the features include:

*Multi-tasking software.
*Advanced error diffusion stippling.
*Cut and Paste with masking.
*Capture into a user definable window.
*Load and save IFF ILBM and ANIM files.
*Grab frames flipped on a X or Y axis.
*Multi frame store with animated playback.
*Composite or S-Video input.

Display in the following resolutions:

PAL	NTSC
320 x 256	320 x 200
320 x 512	320 x 400
640 x 256	640 x 200
640 x 512	640 x 400

Supports several screen modes:

* 4096 HAM mode.
* 64 EHB mode.
* 32 colours.
* 16 colours.
* 16/8/4/2 shade mono.
* 262000 HAM-E mode.
* 256 colour EREG mode.
* Overscan/Interlace/Hi-Res.

Image Processing and Enhancement:

Sharpen/Smooth/Negative/Quantise
Thresholding/Solarization/Mosaic
Edge Detection/Brush selected area.

Workbench 2.00 Compatible.

COLOUR IMAGE CAPTURE FOR ONLY

£99.95 Inc.

Rombo Ltd., Kirkton Campus, Livingston
SCOTLAND EH54 7AZ
Tel: (44) 0506-414631 Fax: (44) 0506-414634
Sales Hotline: (44) 0506-466601

ANIMATION

Professional Animation with Optional Image Capture

OVERVIEW

Take 2, as used in *''Rolfs Cartoon Club''* is the ultimate multi-level animation package. Offering up to 4 levels of animation and 4 levels of sound. Images are drawn within your favourite art package then loaded into Take 2 as IFF files. If you own Vidi-Amiga you can digitise your drawings from within Take 2. We believe its much easier to draw with a pencil than with a mouse.

Some of the features include:

* Compatibility with all Amigas.
* Supports 2, 4, 8, 16 and HAM colour.
* Loads or saves IFF or ANIM files.
* Traditional animators dope sheet.
* Play back up to 25 frames per second.
* Dubbing or simulated onion skin.

and lots more !!!

Applications:

* Traditional animation.
* Storyboards.
* Product presentation.
* Line tester.
* Stop frame animation.
* Cartoon productions.
* Education.
* 3D object animation.
* Video production.

Workbench 2.00 Compatible.

£49.95 Inc.

AS SEEN ON TV

Merlin Grafx (Austria)	(43) 5223 8896
Micropace (U.K.)	(44) 0753 55188
Precision Distribution (U.K.)	(44) 081 5433500
Scibis Sprl (Belgium)	(32) 2245 8307
S.D.L. (U.K.)	(44) 081 3095000
Soundware SRL (Italy)	(39) 3322 32670
V.C.S. (Holland)	(31) 1045 11537